

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



Develop genuine love for others and then
others cannot but love you in return.

ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

Spirit of Islam is a monthly magazine which is now in its seventh year of publication. The aim of this journal is to present Islam in the contemporary idiom, while at the same time the contents are of universal appeal and of interest to a wider circle of spiritual seekers. It is our desire to help Muslims rediscover Islam, focusing on its message of peace and spirituality as derived from the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet, and in general we strive towards religious understanding for bringing about greater harmony.

Another purpose of this magazine is to assist its readers to deal with life's challenges, deriving positivity even from negative occurrences, gaining in spirituality and developing themselves intellectually so that they may contribute constructively to society.

The magazine's regular readers will appreciate that the entire thrust of its articles is directed to the individual—a collection of intellectually prepared individuals being the sole foundation on which a peaceful and harmonious society can be built.

As the subtitle indicates, *Spirit of Islam* is working towards enlightening people on the subject of global peace and regularly addresses relevant contemporary issues. The articles on peace based on the teachings of the Prophet of Islam offer us an ideology of peace—principles which lay down how peace may be established between conflicting groups, controversies resolved and conflicts defused. We believe that violence begins in the mind and so an effective ideology of peace needs to be presented to counter its influence.

We hope and pray that God helps us in this noble endeavour and grants us His special blessings!



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Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

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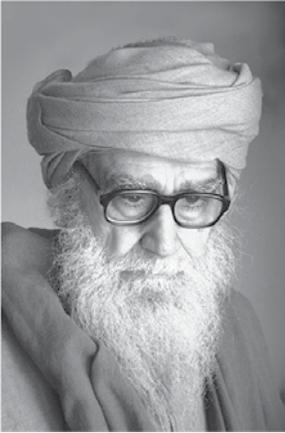
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, born in 1925, in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, is an Islamic spiritual scholar who is well-versed in both classical Islamic learning and modern disciplines. The mission of his life has been the establishment of worldwide peace. He has received the Padma Bhushan, the Demiurgus Peace International Award and Sayyidina Imam Al Hassan Peace award for promoting peace in Muslim societies. He has been called 'Islam's spiritual ambassador to the world' and is recognized as one of its most influential Muslims¹. His books have been translated into sixteen languages and are part of university curricula in six countries. He is the founder of the Centre for Peace and Spirituality based in New Delhi.

EMBRACING ISLAM 'IN TOTALITY'

WHAT is Islam? To put it quite simply, Islam is the way to become a good and upright person. When one becomes good in the real sense of the word, one is good to oneself, to one's family, to one's society, and to all humankind.

The world around us is a perfect world. From atoms to galaxies, everything acts so perfectly that we can predict their behaviour. This is because everything in nature obeys the law of God. Likewise, when man obeys the law of God, he becomes as perfect as he ought to be. He develops a predictable nature, like everything else in the world.

Islam means submission to God. The Quran tells us that submission to God is the only religion for both man and the universe:

“Do they seek a religion other than the religion of God, when everything in the heavens and the earth has submitted to Him, willingly or unwillingly? To Him they shall all return.” (3: 83)

Thus, Islam means living in harmony with nature, as one ought to, face to face with reality. Man has not created himself; he has been created

1. The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims 2019, Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre, Jordan.

by God. To live in accordance with reality, then, is to acknowledge the greatness of God and show appreciation of His favours. The emotions of love and fear are inherent in man. He wants something to rely upon, something to focus his efforts on. If he leads his life in accordance with reality, he will focus all his attention on God alone. For besides Him, all things are creatures; nothing besides Him has any real power.

The entire human race, past and present, is progeny of Adam. A life in accordance with reality then will be one of kindness to others, as if one were dealing with one's own brothers and sisters.

Everyone has been endowed with a conscience which favours justice and despises injustice and cruelty. Life in accordance with reality, then, is one of kindness and justice.

Death is bound to strike one day. It will deprive everyone of their worldly possessions. One who lives in accordance with reality will look at the ups and downs of life as transitory and insignificant. He will regard everybody as God's servants, irrespective of worldly status.

When one comes upon the truth, one might be disposed to reject it. But one should remember that one day everyone will have to accept truth and falsehood for what they are. One should willingly accept today what one will be forced to accept tomorrow.

The position Islam occupies in relation to our lives should be an integral, not a supplementary one:

“We take on God's own dye. Who has a better dye than God's? We worship Him alone.” (2: 138)

Here is an example to illustrate this point. When a stone is dropped in water, it descends to the bottom and settles there. It is in the water but separate from it. On the other hand, if a dye is put into the same glass, the dye and water combine. The water is not separate from the dye. Both have intermingled in such a way that no one can detect any difference between the two.

The relationship between Islam and a true believer should be like that of dye and water, not of stone and water. Islam should not be just an accessory to a Muslim's life; it should merge with his whole being; as the Quran says, Islam should be entered into 'in its totality'. (2: 208)

When a person adopts Islam in this manner, it becomes the throb of his heart as it permeates his emotions. It enters his thoughts, moulding his intellect in its own fashion. It becomes the eye with which he sees,

the tongue with which he speaks, the hands and feet with which he performs his daily functions. It takes possession of a person, to the exclusion of everything else. His every statement bears the stamp of Islam and his every action becomes dyed in Islamic colours.

If Islam is like a stone in water in a person's life, it is not Islam at all. Faith should be absorbed in a person like dye is dissolved in water. Just as the emotions of love and hate are felt by the whole body, so, when one adopts Islam in the real sense of the word, it becomes an issue affecting one's whole existence. The Muslim and Islam become inseparably attached to one another.

By way of introduction to the Islamic way of life, some sayings of the Prophet Muhammad are mentioned here:

“Let him who believes in God and the Last Day either speak good or keep silent; and let him who believes in God and the Last Day honour his neighbour; and let him who believes in God and the Last Day be generous to his guest.”

“Fear God wherever you are, and follow up a bad deed with a good one and it will wipe it out, and behave well towards people.”

“Righteousness is good-naturedness, and evil is what wavers in your soul that you would not like people to find out about you.”

“None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.”

A man came to the Prophet and said: “Messenger of God, tell me something which, if I do it, will win me the love of both God and men.” The Prophet said, “If you renounce the world, God will love you; and if you renounce what people possess, they will love you.” □

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FROM THE EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Dr Farida Khanam is an author, editor, translator, public speaker and former professor of Islamic Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Among her books are 'A Simple Guide to Sufism' and 'A Study of World's Major Religions'. She has translated into English many books authored by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. Currently the chairperson of CPS International, she is a regular contributor of articles to various publications. Dr Khanam has edited Maulana's English translation of the Quran and has also translated his Urdu commentary of the Quran into English. She can be reached at hub@thespiritofislam.org

ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES

LIFE: According to Islam life is a creation of God. God desired to create life and there was life. Creation falls into four categories— inanimate matter, plants, animals, and human beings. No category has evolved from any other.

Islam states that all four have been produced as a separate creation. Similarly, of living things, there are a great number of species, right from amoeba to human beings. Again, none of these living species has been produced from any other through the process of evolution. Rather they have all been created separately. There is no doubt that there is some similarity in their physical system, but each has a permanent, separate existence. There is no concept of a missing link in Islam.

MAN:

The Prophet Muhammad said: "God created man in His own image." This does not mean that life in the form of man is a part of God. Islam believes in dualism. As per the Islamic concept, God and human beings are two separate entities. It simply means that man is endowed with certain special qualities. We know that mountains cannot walk, but humans can. The ocean cannot hear, but humans can. The moon cannot see, but man can. No two trees can enter into a dialogue, but two persons can. No planet can organize a seminar, but human beings can. No stars can invent a machine, but life in the form of man can. These are the unique qualities of the human being.

PURPOSE OF MAN'S CREATION:

According to a *Hadith* (saying of the Prophet Muhammad), God said: "I was a hidden treasure. Then I wanted to be known and I created human beings." It is a fact that the capacity for conceptual thinking is the special quality of human beings. So God created man for this purpose. It is required that human beings discover God's existence and realize His presence. Once man realizes God, he is showered with divine blessings. Then he offers thanks to his Sustainer. In Islam, thanksgiving is the greatest form of worship.

THE RELIGION OF ISLAM & SCIENCE:

As far as the relationship between science and religion is concerned, it could be referred to as a very well-established principle of Islam which is known as *al-Maruf* (the good). It means that anything proved to be good for humankind would also be regarded as good in Islam.

Here is a very relevant *Hadith* which throws light on this matter. The Prophet of Islam was born in Makkah, a desert city where he lived for fifty-three years. Then he migrated to Madinah which was built on fertile land, with soil especially suitable for date plantation. There were many date orchards in the city. As a matter of ancient custom, the Madinans used to pollinate the date plants artificially.

Prophet was not familiar with this custom. One day when he passed by some people who had climbed up to the top of date palms, he enquired as to what they were doing. He was told that they were pollinating the trees in order to fertilize them. The Prophet said, 'I don't think this will benefit them.' When people learned of the Prophet's comment, they stopped the practice of pollination. This led to a very low yield that year.

When the Prophet came to know of this, he said, "If they benefit from pollination, they should continue with this practice. It was only an opinion." Then the Prophet told the date growers to adhere to their own methods, and said, "You know better about your worldly affairs" (*Sahih Muslim*). According to this teaching, worldly affairs like horticulture, agriculture, engineering, architecture, and irrigation and, of course, all the disciplines dealing with life sciences fall into the category of *al-Maruf*. In terms of scientific research and experience, whatever proves to be good for humankind will also be regarded as good in Islam. So

It is required that human beings discover God's existence and realize His presence. Once man realizes God, he is showered with divine blessings.

there is no possibility of contradiction between Islam and facts proved by any branch of science, including the biological sciences.

ORGAN DONATION:

Although the Quran and *Hadith* provide principles covering this area, we do not find details of these basic injunctions. For instance, the development that has taken place in the science of surgery has shown that some parts of the human body can be transplanted in another human body. If the eye of a dead person is taken out immediately after his death, it can be transplanted in the eye socket of a blind person and he may gain his sight.

Basic guidelines, not details, regarding these matters are given in the Quran and *Hadith*. Islam gives us a principle that applies to this subject as well. That is, "everything is lawful unless it is declared unlawful."

In the light of this Islamic principle, we can safely say that the donation of any organ is permissible in Islam, for the *Shariah* has not held it unlawful.

Then there is another principle in Islam known as *sadaqa-jaria*, i.e. the perpetuation of a charitable deed. The benefits of this kind of charity are long-lasting. The good effect of a transplanted eye will endure long after the donor's death. Such acts, far from incurring God's displeasure, will bring the donor divine rewards. □

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TOWARDS GLOBAL PEACE

We often talk of peace in the context of war. But this is a very narrow and restricted notion of peace. Peace is deeply linked with the entirety of human life. Peace is a complete ideology in itself. Peace is the only religion for both—man and the universe. It is the master-key that opens the doors to every success. Peace creates a favourable atmosphere for success in every endeavour. Without peace, no positive action—small or big—is possible.



IDEAL PEACE IS UNACHIEVABLE

PEACE is a must for the survival of our civilization. Peace is a must for all kinds of constructive work. As such, it is of the greatest concern to everyone. Everyone wants a peaceful society, a peaceful world. Yet, for the greater part of humanity, peace remains a distant dream. Why so? Why this sad state of affairs? Why this contradiction between ideal and practical? It is high time to go deeper into the matter. It is the duty of all sincere people to inquire into the real cause of this contradiction so that a viable peace formula may be evolved.

An in-depth study of this problem from the historical as well as the Islamic point of view presents two viewpoints in this matter: the concept of peace as defined by social scientists and the concept of peace as defined by the ideologists. The scientists' concept of peace is based on realities while the idealists' concept of peace is based on utopianism or wishful thinking. It is mainly the ideologists' concept of peace which has created the present crisis of peace throughout the world. The scientists' formula for peace is the only practicable one, for the idealists' formula is merely a formulation of people's own wishes.

Academicians define peace as an absence of war. But the idealists differ with this notion saying that the mere absence of war cannot be called peace. They hold that peace and justice should go hand in hand. To them the only acceptable formula is that which restores justice in its ideal sense. But the building of such a utopian world is simply impossible.

This concept of peace is seemingly beautiful. Because of this apparent beauty, it has gained general popularity. The masses everywhere are obsessed with the idealistic concept of peace. But one has to differentiate between what is possible and what is impossible. There is no other alternative. One has to be practical rather than idealistic if one wants to achieve a positive result. The object of peace is only to normalize the situation between two warring sides.

Peace is not aimed at satisfying the concerned parties in terms of rights and justice. Rights and justice are totally different issues. Linking them with peace is unnatural as well as impractical. These are goals to be worked for separately and independently. Furthermore, in this world of competition, no one can receive peace and justice in terms of his own personal criteria. It is situations and circumstances which will dictate to what extent we can achieve these goals.

The masses everywhere are obsessed with the idealistic concept of peace. But one has to differentiate between what is possible and what is impossible.

Also, in this world of competition, it is not possible for anyone to receive perfect justice, so one has to be content with practical justice. People who seek peace with justice fail to achieve anything positive and during this futile exercise, they lose what they already

had in their hands. Conversely, those who delink justice from peace are always successful in life.

To illustrate this point, two examples from history are cited here. One from the early period of Islam and one from the modern history of Japan. It is a well-known fact that the Prophet of Islam was repeatedly challenged by his opponents in ancient Arabia. There were several instances of wars and violence. Then the Prophet managed to finalize a peace treaty between the Muslims and their opponents, known as Hudaibiya Peace Treaty. Historical records show that this peace treaty was finalized, apparently giving no justice to the Prophet of Islam, but the Prophet concluded this treaty by delinking the question of justice from the question of peace. This delinking of the two issues gave him the success which is described in the Quran as a clear victory (48: 1). The Quran called this a victory because, although the peace treaty itself was devoid of justice, it instantly normalized the situation, thus enabling the Prophet to avail of the opportunities present at the time. What the Prophet lost in Hudaibiya, he gained on a far larger scale throughout the whole of Arabia.

Now let us look at the example of Japan. In World War II, Japan was defeated by the USA. Okinawa Island was occupied by the American army after the conclusion of a peace treaty, the terms of which were dictated by America. Japan, willingly or unwillingly, accepted a treaty in which justice was delinked from peace. But what was the result? Within a period of few decades, the entire scenario changed. Japan did lose the Okinawa Island, but it gained the entire USA (North American continent) as its industrial market. And now it enjoys the status of a world economic superpower.

Peace is not meant to establish justice. The purpose of peace is only to normalize the situation so that one may uninterruptedly avail of the opportunities present at that time.

This detailed study leads to the conclusion that the scientific concept of peace is the only correct and practicable concept. Thus, peace is not meant to establish justice. The purpose of peace is only to normalize the situation so that one may uninterruptedly avail of the opportunities present at that time. □



**WE LOOK FORWARD
TO YOUR FEEDBACK**

Dear Readers,

Spirit of Islam team believes in the involvement of readers to enhance the quality of the magazine. Your precious views, suggestions, and recommendations in this regard are earnestly solicited and will be readily acknowledged. Kindly mail us your views at:

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LESSONS FROM THE UNIVERSE

An Islamic Perspective

OUR universe is a beautiful work of the Creator and many of the beautiful names of God point to this phenomenon. God is called: *Al-Khaliq* (the Creator), *Al-Bari* (The Maker), *Al-Musawwir* (the Shaper), *al-Muhyiy* (The Giver of Life) and *Al-Badi* (The Innovative Creator). The universe was fashioned by God according to a well-conceived plan. When God decided to create something, He gave the divine command 'Be' and the thing was created.

The Quran states:

'Do they seek a religion other than the religion of God, when everything in the heavens and the earth has submitted to Him, willingly or unwillingly? To Him they shall all return'. (3: 83)

The entire cosmos, from the particles of dust to the gigantic galaxies, is under the direct domination of the One God Who alone, is the Master of all beings.

According to the above verse, the universe has been subjected to the code of monotheism—that God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, and that in Him alone are vested all powers. None besides Him has any sway over the universe. The entire cosmos, from the particles of dust to the gigantic galaxies, is under the direct domination of the One God Who alone, is the Master of all beings. This is the reason that the entire universe, with all its vast expanse, is exactly as it should be. No flaw in its functioning has ever been detected and its speed has not faltered even by a second

during the innumerable of millions of years of its existence. This is the model that man is asked to follow, for it is a practical demonstration of the creed of monotheism.

Total Submission

The greatest and most salient characteristic of the universe is that it is fully obedient to its Creator (41:12). Even after the elapsing of hundreds of millions of years, the sun, the earth and, the stars, moving at incredible speeds in their orbits, have not wavered even by a fraction of a second in their course, each one faithfully carrying out the duty assigned to it. Man is likewise required to demonstrate that same total submission. Man is called upon to make even his most fervent personal desires

subservient to the will of God. At all times, he must unfailingly do as the Lord desires. His hands and feet, his eyes and tongue, his heart and mind, all must bow in supplication to God, so that no part of him, whether mental or physical, should in any way flout His will.

Worship of God

The Quran tells us that all things in the universe worship and glorify God (24: 41). The very birds chirping in the green boughs of the trees seem to sing songs in praise of their Creator and Sustainer. The trees, when they cast their shadows on the earth, seem to have lain prostrate themselves before their Creator. The sun, when it sends down its beautiful rays to earth after the darkness of night, seems to express the thought: 'Glorified be the One Who is the source of all light. Should He choose to extinguish it, darkness would engulf the entire universe.' It is this very same formula which man is called upon to follow. Overwhelmed with gratitude for God's munificence, he must also give expression to his devotion by singing the glories of his Lord. Remembrance of God should become the richest treasure of his life, and devotion to Him should become a lifelong vocation.

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Stability of Character

One important characteristic of the universe is that it moves on its course with such exactitude that coming events can be forecast with one hundred percent certainty (10: 5). The same kind of predictability is essential in man. So methodical and so responsible should his conduct be that his probable reaction in any given situation should be plainly foreseeable. Even at the most preliminary stage of any transaction with him, we should feel that we know for certain what his attitude and plan of action will be. His word should indeed be as dependable as the rising and the setting of the sun.

Harmony

Another compelling aspect of the universe is that all its parts work in complete harmony with each other (36: 40). It has never been the case that the sun and moon have worked at cross purposes. The stars never collide. Air and water, sun and soil, all work in unison with each other.

More than one hundred elements, the components of all the known matter in the universe, work in perfect accord, and no clash of purpose has ever been detected in them. It behoves man also to emulate their example and, in the carrying out of whatever his tasks may be, avoid any confrontations with others.

Result-oriented Approach

An inestimable virtue of the universe is that all its activities bear fruit (13: 17). As far as our world is concerned, the rotation of the earth, the alternation between day and night, the rains, the changes of the seasons, etc., are all, as it were, result-oriented. Natural activity, if allowed to go on unhindered, will never cause chaos and man would do well to adapt himself to this principle.

Divine Morals As Reflected in the Universe

The purpose and wisdom, which manifest themselves in the wider universe under the direct control of God, have to be adopted by man of his own accord in his personal life. What God has established on a physical plane, man has to establish on a moral plane. With the same strength as is possessed by the iron which is found everywhere in the cosmos, man must have real staunchness of character. But kind-

The purpose and wisdom, which manifest themselves in the wider universe under the direct control of God, have to be adopted by man of his own accord in his personal life.

heartedness must spring from him too, in the way that the springs gush forth from the rocks. Just as fragrance and colour are to be found in abundance in the cosmos, so should man's life be enhanced by the fairness and honesty of his dealings. He should be like the tree which breathes out oxygen in return for the carbon dioxide which it breathes in: that is, he should return good for evil; he should be kind to those who wrong him. He should learn too, from the fact that nothing in the cosmos ever encroaches upon anything else. Each physical entity concentrates solely upon playing its own part in the order of the

universe. Man must also engage in the same positive action, avoiding all negative activities. Innumerable activities are going on throughout the cosmos on the grandest of scales, but without any recompense. In like manner, man should keep on discharging his responsibilities without thinking of reward. He should reflect upon how the lofty mountains and the trees cast their shadows upon the earth, with no thought for what anyone can do for them in return, and should emulate this act in

all humility, for, as the Prophet has enjoined, no one should be proud; no one should consider himself superior to others.

The activities going on in the world at every moment proclaim who are worthy and who are unworthy. Those who are motivated solely by the superficial interests of money, honour or fame are little better than miserable misfits in this selfless world of God. They are not true to the standards set in in this universe, which is a living manifestation of divine ethics. Only those who can be motivated by the truth, pure and simple, who can rise above personal interests, freeing themselves from complexes and obsessions, shall be deserving of honour and glory from God. In the heavenly world to come, all those who have been activated solely by their immediate worldly interests will be marked down as unworthy, and cast out from it. This beautiful and blissful world will be inherited only by those who, motivated by unworldly interests, lifted their eyes from the immediate, material things in order to be able to see things distant and 'unseen'.

Those who are motivated solely by the superficial interests of money, honour or fame are little better than miserable misfits in this selfless world of God.

The universe demonstrates at all points in time and on a vast scale what kind of citizens are required by God to inherit the ideal world of tomorrow—Paradise. God desires men who will be true to His morals, and who will practice the religion that is enshrined in theory, in His Book and, in practice, in His universe. Those who refuse to learn their lesson and persist in following the path of selfish passion are wrongdoers of the worst kind. Those who refuse to see God's signs, although they have eyes, and refuse to hear God's voice, although they have ears, are, in the eyes of God, 'the worst creatures'. (8: 22) □



CREATION OF MAN

As Described in the Quran

MAN is God's servant. Man has been created by God with a plan, that is, to place him temporarily on earth in order to test him. Then those who pass this test will be rewarded, while those who fail will be rejected.

For the purposes of this test, man has been granted freedom in this world. Whatever man receives in this world is not as a matter of right but only as a matter of trial. Every situation here is a test, and in all situations, man must give a proper performance as is required of him by God.

The proper attitude for man is not to take to the paths of his desires, but to try to understand the divine plan of creation and then after being convinced of its ineluctability, he should build his life accordingly.

Man may deviate from the divine plan by misusing the freedom given to him by God, but he cannot save himself from the consequences of this deviation.

In such a state of affairs, it is in the interest of man himself that he remain extremely cautious in determining the course of his life. Instead of being guided by his own will and desires, he should make God's will his guide. Instead of pursuing his own ambitions, he should lead a life in conformance with the commands of God.

Man may be a masterpiece of divine creation, but he must nevertheless remain subservient to the plan of God. Making a full acknowledgement of these two aspects of the existence of humankind is the key to human progress.

Man succeeded in building a modern industrial civilization by discovering and exploiting the laws of nature. Similarly, in the next world man will achieve lasting success on a much vaster scale, but only after striving earnestly to comprehend God's creation plan for humanity and then adhering unflinchingly to its edicts.

Man's True Purpose in Life

Man attains his highest distinction only when he leads a purposeful life. Such a life characterizes the most advanced stage of human development. This does not mean that, by taking up just any task which is ostensibly significant, man's life becomes truly purposeful. A really

purposeful life is one in which man discovers his supreme status as a moral being. It is a life in which his personality makes manifest the unique and distinctive ability to make moral choices. An animal strives to obtain food; a bird flies in search of a better country when the season changes; a wasp busies itself building up its home from tiny particles of earth; a herd of deer takes measures to protect itself from wild beasts of prey. All of these appear to be purposeful actions. But when the phrase 'a purposeful life' is applied to man, it does not refer to practical efforts of this nature. Without doubt arranging for food, clothes and shelter are some of the tasks that man has to perform in this world; but this is a level of purposefulness at which men and animals, being concerned only with bare survival, are equal. Its true application in relation to man can only be that in which he appears in all his dignity: when it goes beyond common animalism and takes the form of superior humanism.

God's creations in this world fall into two categories: animate and inanimate. Obviously, animate objects enjoy a certain superiority over inanimate objects. The former can be divided into three classes: the vegetable, the animal and the human. Modern scientific research has shown that plants also possess life, in that they nourish themselves, they grow and they have feelings.

But animals and men surely represent a higher form of life. In what way does man excel animals? Many theories have been advanced in answer to this question over the ages, and great minds are still studying it. But modern biologists have come to the conclusion that it is man's capacity for conceptual thought, which distinguishes him from other life forms. Animals lack this quality, whereas man is conscious of the fact that he is thinking. He consciously forms all plans of action in his mind. In his everyday life, his actions are determined by him. Whereas this is not the case with animals. Though many of their actions appear to be like those of men, these actions are not the result of thought; they all stem from pure instinct. Animals are simply led intuitively in a certain direction by their desires and their needs. Their actions are governed by environmental stresses from without and physical pressures from within.

It is from this unique capacity of man to conceptualize that we can conceive of what his higher purpose in life should be: one which in no

Modern biologists have come to the conclusion that it is man's capacity for conceptual thought, which distinguishes him from other life forms. Animals lack this quality, whereas man is conscious of the fact that he is thinking.

way results from the pressures of desire or of immediate exigencies. It must emanate from his own urge to worship God.

Man's true purpose in life can only be one which reflects the nobler side of his character; one which represents him as the superior being that he is.

If one pauses at this stage to take note of what the Quran has to say, one will find that it gives us clear guidance in this matter. Man's purpose in life has been explained in the Quran in the following words:

I created the *jinn* and humankind only so that they might worship Me: I seek no sustenance from them, nor do I want them to feed Me—it is God who is the great Sustainer, the Mighty One, the Invincible. (51: 56-58)

These verses specify man's purpose in life as worship. This is a purpose that highlights man's uniqueness in its ultimate form. It raises man to a much higher plane than that of the animals. Not a trace of animalism contributes to the achievement of such a goal. God does not, as the verse states, demand of you a livelihood, rather He himself is responsible for your livelihood. This means worship of God is a purpose, which is motivated neither by inward desires nor outward influences but comes into being through conscious thought alone. Only when a person goes

Only when a person goes beyond self and his environment can he understand that there is a higher purpose on which he should focus his life.

beyond self and his environment can he understand that there is a higher purpose on which he should focus his life. The motivating force towards the fulfillment of this purpose is not the urge to satisfy one's needs or those of others. The worshipper seeks neither to gratify his own desires nor those of the Being he worships. It is a purpose which sets before man a goal far above all these things—a goal which does not follow internal needs or external pressures, but results purely from conceptual thought.

When a person works, makes money, builds a house, and makes an effort to improve his standard of living, he appears to be engaged in efforts towards some worthy end. But a life of this nature cannot be called a purposeful life, for these activities do not demonstrate man's unique status. It might seem as if they are the result of deliberation, but if one looks at the matter in-depth, one will see that in actuality the motivating force behind these actions is the same urge that motivates

an animal in various ways, i.e. its concern for its own survival. It is the driving force of one's desires, the pressure of one's needs, and the wish to fulfill the demands of one's self that underlie such a life. These are the considerations which, in fact, guide a person in his search for his livelihood.

When man grows up, he realizes that there are certain material necessities without which he cannot live. He requires food, clothes, a place to live; he requires a reliable source of income to sustain him throughout his life. He is forced by these considerations to obtain these things. Then he sees that those who have an abundance of these material things enjoy respect and apparently possess every form of happiness and luxury in this world. Thus, he is driven on to do more than just seek a livelihood; he desires to earn to a degree greatly in excess of his actual requirements.

In bustling markets, grandiose offices, and opulent buildings, he is not really guided by deliberate thought. Rather, he is being guided by inflated ideas of his own needs, desires, longings, and ambitions to achieve fame and high status in this world. For this reason, these activities cannot be considered as being directed towards the purpose, which sets man apart from the animals and lends him a higher distinction.

When man seeks the pleasure of his Lord, his human qualities are fully realized. This is a purpose loftier than the one towards which an animal directs its energies.

Man's greater dignity cannot be based only on a purpose which emanates from inner desires and pressures of the environment. Man's true purpose in life can only be to seek the pleasure of God. When man seeks the pleasure of his Lord, his human qualities are fully realized. This is a purpose loftier than the one towards which an animal directs its energies. It distinguishes man from the animals. It is the ultimate station of human dignity.

To determine the purpose of life is, in short, to strive to make life meaningful. It must surely, therefore, be one which is in accordance with man's unique status; it must be one which leads man on the path to success and progress in terms of his true nature.

Man as a Finite Being

Man is placed on earth only for a very short time. There, he will be trained, tested, and then passed over to the Hereafter where he will

stay forever. The possessions and blessings of this world, although created in a way similar to their originals in Heaven, actually possess many defects and weaknesses. For they are only intended to make man remember the Hereafter.

Death is not the end of a person's life. It is only the beginning of the next stage of life. Death is that interim stage when man leaves this temporary world of today for the eternal world of tomorrow.

God describes how the world is a temporary place full of deception: "Never forget that the life of this world is only a game and a passing delight, a show, and mutual boasting and trying to outlive each other in riches and children. It is like the growth of vegetation after the rain, which delights the planter, but which then withers away, turns yellow and becomes worthless stubble. In the life to come there will be a terrible punishment, or God's forgiveness and approval: the life of this world is nothing but a means of deception."

(57: 20)

Just as it is stated in the Quran, all of the ignorant people live only for a few objectives such as riches and children and other things about which they can boast. In another verse, the goods and chattels of deception in the world are described thus:

The satisfaction of worldly desires through women, and children, and heaped-up treasures of gold and silver, and pedigreed horses, and cattle and lands is attractive to people. All this is the provision of the worldly life; but the most excellent abode is with God. Say, 'Shall I tell you of something better than all of these? For the God-fearing, there are Gardens in nearness to their God with rivers flowing through them where they shall live forever with pure spouses and the goodwill of God. God is watching His servants. (3: 14-15)

The life of this world is extremely rudimentary and lacking in worth when compared to the eternal life in the Hereafter. To express this, the original Arabic word for the "world" has the connotation of a "scanty, crowded, dirty place". People consider that their 60-70 year long life on this earth will be a long and satisfying one. Yet, in a very short time death comes and all are buried in their graves. As a matter of fact, as death comes closer, one realizes how short a time he has stayed in this world. On the Day of Resurrection, God will question the people.

He will ask, 'How many years did you stay on earth?' They will say, 'We stayed a day or part of a day. Ask those who have kept count.' He will

say, 'You only stayed for a little while, if only you knew. 'Do you imagine that We created you without any purpose and that you would not be brought back to Us?' (23: 112-115)

Denying God and disregarding the Hereafter in the lifelong pursuit of worldly attainments will result in eternal punishment in Hell-fire. Those who conduct themselves in this way are described in the Quran as "people who buy the life of this world for the price of the Hereafter". For them God decrees: "Their penalty shall not be lightened, nor shall they be helped." (2: 86)

Another verse states:

Those who rest not their hope on their meeting with Us, but are pleased and satisfied with the life of the present and those who heed not Our Signs; their abode is the Fire, because of the evil they earned. (10: 7-8)

Those who forget that this world is only a temporary place of trial and who are not mindful of God's signs, but are quite satisfied with worldly play and the amusements of this life, assuming them to be their own, and even deifying them, will surely deserve the most grievous penalty. The Quran describes the status of such people:

Anyone who has acted arrogantly, and prefers the life of this world, will find himself in Hell. (79: 37-39)

God has made His Heaven full of all kinds of blessings in the world of the Hereafter. Those who prove to be God-fearing and pious in this world will enter that world to find the gates of Heaven eternally open for them. But those who are oblivious of God in this present world will be deprived of the blessings of the Hereafter.

God is invisible in this present world, and will appear in all His power and majesty only in the world of the Hereafter. Then all human beings will bow low before Him. But at that time, surrendering will be of no avail. Surrendering before God after seeing Him in the Hereafter will not benefit anyone.

Death is not the end of a person's life. It is only the beginning of the next stage of life. Death is that interim stage when man leaves this temporary world of today for the eternal world of tomorrow. He goes out of the temporary accommodation of the world to enter the eternal resting place of the Hereafter. The coming of this stage in the Hereafter is the greatest certainty in one's life. No one can save himself from this fate in the Hereafter. □

HUMANKIND AND PARADISE

Designed for Each Other

HUMANKIND and Paradise are counterparts of each other. They hold a complementary nature towards each other. Paradise has been made for man and man has been made for Paradise. The truth is that Paradise yearns for man and man aspires for Paradise. Without man Paradise is incomplete and without Paradise, man is incomplete. This fact is an essential part of the creation plan of God—that this world is the ground for the development of heavenly personalities who can qualify to reside in eternal Paradise.

According to the Quran:

Why should God punish you, if you render thanks to Him and believe in Him? God is appreciative and aware. (4: 147)

This implies that the requirements of the creation plan of God cannot be fulfilled if man makes himself deserving of Hell by his misconduct. The creation plan of God demands that man makes himself deserving of Heaven so that in the Hereafter he can reside eternally in the gardens of Paradise.

Man has been created to inhabit Paradise, but by the misuse of the freedom granted by God, he makes himself deserving only to be fuel for Hell-fire.

The truth is that man has been created to inhabit Paradise, but by the misuse of the freedom granted by God, he makes himself deserving only to be fuel for Hell-fire. He fails to acknowledge the freedom granted to him by God; the freedom that was given so that he may creatively revere and adore God; profess his gratitude for the blessings endowed throughout his life and declare and discover his benefactor. This is the objective

with which man was created and this is the man about which it may be said that he was made for Paradise and Paradise made for him. □



THE PRICE OF ANGER

Counterproductive and Disastrous

ALBETANO, an ancient Roman philosopher, is recorded as having said: 'The angry man always thinks he can do more than he can.' When a man is intoxicated with alcohol, he is not in control of himself. He may even go so far as to bang his head on a stone, unmindful of the fact that it may not be the stone that breaks but his own head. This is because, in his inebriated state, he wrongly gauges his abilities and proceeds to do things which may have unfavourable consequences.

The same is true of the angry man. In a towering rage, a man is not in control of himself. He overestimates his capabilities. Consequently, he involves himself in activities which are beyond his control. He realizes his foolishness only when his temper has abated. But, by that time, the wrong step has been taken and destruction has followed in its wake. It is now too late for regrets. He is unable to save himself from his wrong action.

In India, one glaring example of such misjudgement is evident in the unending conflict between the Muslims and the police, most notably in Jammu and Kashmir. For some reason or the other, Muslims become enraged with the police, and then they clash with them. This invariably results in the Muslims coming to grief. The reason that the clash takes place at all is that, because the Muslims became so irate, they do not stop to compare their strength with that of the armed constabulary. If they were to think about the situation dispassionately, they would make a true estimate of their strength, and that in itself would be enough to prevent them from clashing with the police. Anger blinds them to the reality of their weakness. They start fighting with forces superior to their own, and the result is that they—the Muslims—are the sufferers.

The moral of this is that one should never do anything of any importance when in an angry mood. Steps to counter supposed adversaries should be taken only after all anger has subsided. This will mean fewer setbacks and more successes in life. □

While angry, a man is not in control of himself. He overestimates his capabilities, consequently he involves himself in activities which are beyond his control.

FROM THE SPIRITUAL TREE

There is a tree beside my house. I call it the 'Spiritual Tree'. I derive spiritual inspiration from it. A tree is an ever-growing being that was initially a seed possessing the potential of becoming a full-grown tree. A seed takes food from the universe around it and then grows into a tree. The same is true with spirituality, the desire for which is intrinsic to, and an integral part of, the very nature of every human being. To realize this spirituality, man must derive spiritual food from the universe around him. A tree converts carbon-dioxide into oxygen; a spiritual person is one who can take positive lessons from negative situations. From this perspective, a tree is an embodiment of a spiritual personality. —Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



DEVELOPMENT OF CHARACTER

IT is a human tendency to attribute the accumulation of riches to one's own efforts and to hold others responsible for failure to achieve or obtain something desired. As a consequence of this tendency, we fall prey to false pride in our abilities on the one hand, and to false complaints against others, on the other.

Actually, we should consider the good things that we possess as gifts from God, and should attribute the lack of the things that we do not yet possess to our own shortcomings. In this way, we can really help ourselves in character-development. It can make us positive-thinking people. It must be remembered that there is nothing in the world worse than a negative-thinking character.

To help us become positive-thinking people, we need to work on increasing our awareness of ourselves through study, reflection, and contemplation. A *Hadith* quotes the Prophet as asking God: "O God, grant me the ability to see things as they are."

A major problem with us is that we do not see things as they really are. And so, typically, we overestimate ourselves and, at the same time, underestimate others. This unrealistic way of thinking is really very

dangerous. People who fall prey to this mentality will possibly fail in this world as well as in the next.

How, then, should we think of ourselves and of others?

The proper way is to be modest in our estimation of ourselves, and, along with this, to acknowledge the goodness of others. □



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BELIEF IN PROPHETHOOD

Window to God-realization

PROPHETHOOD or *Risalah* is a fundamental article of faith in Islam. A Muslim should believe in Prophethood and in all the prophets sent by God and make no distinction between them.

Man has been placed on this earth by God in order that his obedience to his Maker may be put to test. For this purpose, he has been given complete freedom to tread the paths of either good or evil. He has a choice. But to follow the path desired for him by God, man is in need of guiding principles. The true source of guidance, according to Islam, is to be found in prophethood. Throughout human history, God in His infinite mercy selected certain individuals to communicate His message to humankind, so that all human beings might be given an opportunity to follow the right path. These chosen people are called prophets, or messengers.

Man has been placed on this earth by God in order that his obedience to his Maker may be put to test. For this purpose, he has been given complete freedom to tread the paths of either good or evil.

A prophet is a person chosen by God as His representative. When God appoints someone as His Messenger, He sends His angel to him to inform him of his new status. In that way, the individual can have no doubts about his appointment as God's apostle. Later, God reveals His message to him through His angels, so that he may communicate the divine teachings to all his fellow men.

God has given man a mind so that he may be endowed with understanding. But this mind can only grasp things that are apparent. It cannot go below the surface, and there are many things to be apprehended, for which a superficial knowledge is insufficient. The deeper realities of this world are beyond the scope of the human mind, and so far as God and the next world are concerned, they must remain forever invisible—beyond the reach of human perception.

What the Prophet does is to enlighten people so that they may overcome this human inadequacy. He tells of the reality of things here and now, and also gives tidings of the next world. He thereby enables the individual to formulate a plan for his entire existence in the full light of knowledge and awareness so that he may carve out a successful life for himself.

Since the settlement of human beings on earth, the prophets have been coming one after another. In every age they have been the conveyors of God's messages to human beings. However, whatever records of these ancient prophets that have survived, have been rendered historically unreliable by interpolations. The same is true of the books they brought to humankind. The sole exception was the case of the Prophet Muhammad, who was chosen by God as His Final Messenger. The Prophet was born in an age when the history of the world was already being extensively chronicled. This in itself made circumstances conducive to authentic records being kept of God's messages and the Prophet's exemplary life. The relevant facts were passed on from one generation to the next by both oral and written tradition, and with the advent of the printing press came the modern guarantee that no changes would ever be made in the divine scriptures. This renders unassailable the position of the Prophet Muhammad as God's Final Messenger and His sole representative on earth till Doomsday.

All the prophets brought the same basic truth: that there is only one God and that all human beings are accountable to God for their actions: when Doomsday finally comes, they will be judged by Him according to their good and bad deeds.

All the prophets, according to Islam, brought the same basic truth: that there is only one God and that all human beings are accountable to God for their actions: when Doomsday finally comes, they will be judged by Him according to their good and bad deeds. Those who believe in God and His Prophet shall be rewarded by God in the next world, while those who disbelieve shall be punished by God in the next world as befits the deeds they have performed on earth.

God chooses for Himself whom He wills, and guides to Himself those who turn to Him in repentance. (42: 13)

God's messengers came in every age and to every region. According to a *Hadith*, starting with Adam and ending with the Prophet Muhammad, 1,24,000 messengers were sent in succession to guide the people to the right path. The prophets mentioned by name in the Quran are two-dozen in number. The five major Prophets who came before Muhammad were Adam, *Nuh (Noah)*, *Ibrahim (Abraham)*, *Musa (Moses)*, and *Isa (Jesus)*. The Prophet *Muhammad*, the last in this long line of prophets, was called the 'Seal of the Prophets'. (33: 40)

In the past, the need for new prophets had arisen because God's religion, having been distorted in a number of different ways, was no longer in its pristine form. New prophets had to come to the world periodically in order to revive the true spirit of religion, and thus restore it to its original form. After the Prophet Muhammad, there was no need for another prophet, for the Book—the Quran—which he gave to the world, has been preserved intact, in its original form.

The Islamic concept of prophethood is different from that of other religions. Some religions would have it that God Himself becomes incarnate in human shape, and that His prophets are in some way superhuman or other-worldly. But a prophet in the Islamic sense is no different from any other human being. His uniqueness lies simply in his being the chosen messenger of God.

God's Apostles were born into this world just like any other human beings. They led their lives just as others did, thus demonstrating to their people how God's servants should conduct themselves on earth, and showing them clearly what path they must tread in order to avert God's displeasure and make themselves worthy of His blessings.

The prophets who brought books were called *rasul*, while those who did not were called *nabi*. □



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THE UNERASABLE PAST

No Escape from the Consequences

TONY BENN (1925-2014), a British Labour MP, was once dissatisfied with the way an interview for a BBC radio programme was developing and, determined that no part of the dialogue between himself and the reporter should be broadcast. He took steps to erase it from the tape which had been recording it. To the reporter's astonishment, he reached into a cupboard and produced a powerful electromagnet which he duly plugged in and waved over the tape, thereby completely removing all traces of the conversation which had just taken place.

When one is caught in a difficult situation in this world, there is generally some way or other which allows one to escape from it. One can, for example, have 'a clean record' simply by erasing embarrassing or incriminating statements from a tape. It is just as if, originally, one had never uttered a word. Similarly, one can find loopholes in the law that permit one to escape justice and to proceed in life as if one had never erred in any material or moral sense. All kinds of evasive tactics can, indeed, be practised so that a life of sin, immorality, and crime can be completely whitewashed; that all the ugliness of corruption is thus effectively hidden from the public eye.

In the next world, however, there is no question of erasures, evasion, whitewashing and all the other tactics resorted to by wrongdoers. No novel hi-tech gadgetry will be available to assist in the concealment of the truth. Neither technology nor a clever lawyer, nor the intervention of friends and relatives will be of any avail in the afterlife, where it is impossible either to practise deception or to wipe out the events of the past. Everything that has happened is already there on God's cosmic tape recorder. Search as one may, one will never find any instrument which will erase what is indelibly recorded on God's tape.

Because, in many cases, our evasive tactics are successful in this world, we tend to imagine that the same will hold true of the next world. But the next world is one which is concerned only with realities. □



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KEEPING OUT OF HARM'S WAY

A Leaf out of Nature's Book

TEAK is a tropical hardwood tree used for exterior construction and furniture making, etc. It is produced mainly in Burma, but is also grown in India, Thailand, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. In India, it has been in use for over two thousand years.

The most important property of teak is its extraordinary durability. In ancient times, boats and bridges were built of this wood and in constructions as old as thousand years, teak beams are still found to be in excellent condition.

Man should strive to produce in himself such qualities as will keep his enemies away from him, make them refrain from indulging in injurious courses of action.

The main cause of the durability of teak wood is that it is not eaten away by white ants. Wood serves as a food for white ants, and, once they have made inroads, wood quickly disintegrates. Yet, foes as they are of wood in general, they pose no threat to teak.

Which property keeps teak safe from the menace of white ants? The answer is quite simple. Teak has a bitter taste, which is not to the liking of the white ant.

This example of an inherent quality acting as a life-preserver shows us the way of nature. Nature desired to preserve teak from the depredations of the white ant. To achieve this end, it did not formulate demands or utter protests. It simply endowed teak with such a property as would keep its insect attackers at bay.

Just as wood has an enemy in the white ant, so do men have their human enemies in this world. Now what should a man do to save himself from them? Taking a leaf out of nature's book, he should strive to produce in himself such qualities as will keep his enemies away from him, make them refrain from indulging in injurious courses of action. □



ISLAM AND THE CHALLENGES OF THE WORLD

Emulating the Prophetic Model

MAN faces a number of challenges—intellectual, political, economic, etc.—which are universal in the modern world. A major issue confronting man is whether humankind can continue to live in peace on this planet. This is a matter of great importance because man's very existence is in peril. It is the future of humankind which is at stake.

Various sets of adverse circumstances have together produced a state of unrest throughout the world. At different places, groups of people are engaged in violent clashes with other groups. This state of affairs is such as to render our scientific progress meaningless, and it must be acknowledged that our very civilization is in jeopardy.

Unfortunately, in this baneful sequence of events, the name of Islam has come to be linked with violence. Due to the foolish and imprudent acts of certain Muslims, Islam and violence have come to be regarded as interchangeable terms.

An Indian now living in Europe, was called for an interview by some company there. The interview started like this: "Are you a Muslim?" "Yes", he replied. "Then you must be a terrorist", came the verdict.

As you can imagine, the interview could hardly proceed beyond this point.

But the truth about Islam is the very opposite. The word Islam itself means peace, having been derived from the Arabic root *silm* meaning peace. And the Prophet of Islam is described in the scriptures as a "Mercy to the world." The Quran has this to say: "And God calls you to the home of peace". The lesson that is imparted through *Hajj*, a course of training for a Muslim for the whole of his life, is not to harm a single human being, not even an animal. To call such a religion as one of violence is therefore highly inappropriate.

Due to the foolish and imprudent acts of certain Muslims, Islam and violence have come to be regarded as interchangeable terms.

Islam came to humankind in an age when violence was an integral part of every nation's culture and, as such, was prevalent all over the world. Violence, it was thought, was the most dependable means for the achievement of all ends.

It was at this point that Islam brought to the world the message of peaceful co-existence, not only in theory, but also in practice. The truth is that Islam is a peaceful way of life. It was so for the man of the past, and it is so for the man of today.

But mere casual talk about peace will not, of itself, produce peace for humanity. It is essential rather to formulate a concept of peace in such a manner as to explain and underline its importance. Furthermore, such a concept must be accompanied by a methodology which will facilitate its practical realization.

Simplifying One's Difficulties

The concept presented by Islam for peaceful living is based on the idea that, in this world, adversity is always accompanied by some positive, simplifying factor. That is to say that disadvantages will always be accompanied by advantages. The common man is nevertheless of the view that whenever any difficulty presents itself, the only solution is to fight. And it is this mentality which breeds violence. If, however, he could be convinced that whenever the path to success seemed barred to him, there would always be something inherent in the situation to ease his difficulties, his whole manner of thinking would change.

Mere casual talk about peace will not, of itself, produce peace for humanity. It is essential rather to formulate a concept of peace in such a manner as to explain and underline its importance.

This is not a concept which is immediately acceptable, the main reason being that most people have never formed the habit of identifying the positive factors in a seemingly negative situation. But once this concept has

taken root in a man's mind, he will no longer clash head-on with anything unfavourable that comes in his way. He will, on the contrary, direct his efforts towards seeking whatever advantages lie in store for him. Only after securing these advantages will he start his struggle anew. In this way, on the ideological plane, this concept strikes at the very roots of violence. In addition to this conceptual approach, Islam offers a new methodology based on non-violence rather than on violence. This topic is dealt with briefly here:

Willingness to Accept the Possible

The first principle of the non-violent method is to show willingness to accept what is possible. A fine, practical example of this principle was personally demonstrated by the Prophet of Islam at the outset of his missionary career in Makkah. At that time, in Makkah, the most sacred house of worship, the Kaaba, many deities were being worshipped. The ritual of *Hajj* had been distorted. For instance, the solar instead of the lunar calendar was being used for its observance. Drinking and other evils were rife.

Had the Prophet of Islam directly launched a violent struggle against these he would at once have set off a violent confrontation in Makkah, and the armed conflict would have overshadowed his message of peace.

The Prophet had, at that juncture, formulated an important principle of peace. Presenting it to the world, he put it into practice himself. The principle he followed was to make one's starting point from what was possible. That is to say, to confine one's activity to the field in which opportunities are available under the prevailing system. The rest had to be left for the future.

This was the principle which he followed for thirteen years while working in Makkah. Any attempt to bring about a change in the system in Makkah would only have resulted in clash and confrontation. He, therefore, set before himself the target of bringing about a change in the individual, and continued to work on those same lines for the whole of the Makkan period.

Hijrah means that if the other party comes to the point of aggression in order to stop whatever peaceful work is being undertaken, one must move away from that place rather than take to fighting.

Moving Away from the Point of Confrontation

Another principle formed by the Prophet in this regard was to move away from the point of conflict. This principle took practical shape in the *Hijrah* (emigration). It was in adherence to this principle that the Prophet emigrated to Madinah, leaving his hometown, Makkah, in the thirteenth year of his prophethood.

Hijrah literally means 'to leave'. It means that if the other party comes to the point of aggression in order to stop whatever peaceful work is being undertaken, one must move away from that place rather than take to fighting.

Indeed, *Hijrah* is just one of the strategies employed to avoid confrontation, but if it proves the best method, it must be resorted to, even if it entails leaving one's homeland, property, and relatives.

The Hudaibiya Principle

When the Prophet of Islam emigrated to Madinah, he did not launch any military campaign from there. His adversaries, the Quraysh, however, made military preparations and launched an onslaught without any provocation from the other side. It was due to this aggression that some defensive battles had to be fought. At this juncture, in order to avoid further bloodshed, the Prophet followed an excellent principle which can be termed the Hudaibiya principle.

The superior strategy employed on the occasion of the conquest of Makkah was, quite simply, to achieve one's end, not by the use of force, but by the demonstration of strength.

What the Prophet of Islam did with regard to the Hudaibiya treaty was to accept all the demands of the other party in return for their agreeing to his demand that no battle be fought between them, directly or indirectly, for a period of ten years. The Hudaibiya treaty was, in fact a no-war pact. The Hudaibiya

principle can thus be summed up in these words: unilateral acceptance of all the demands of the opposite party in order to obviate any risks of further clash and confrontation.

The Demonstration Rather Than the Use of Force

In spite of this no-war pact, the Prophet's opponents reopened hostilities—thus committing a breach of their agreement. This time the Prophet adopted a different strategy, with the result that Makkah was ultimately conquered. Very few lives were lost, however, for, beyond minor skirmishes, no armed struggle between the opposing forces took place.

The superior strategy employed on the occasion of the conquest of Makkah was, quite simply, to achieve one's end, not by the use of force, but by the demonstration of strength.

Refraining from Vengeance

The initial strategy adopted by the Prophet after the conquest of Makkah was one of remarkable leniency. After the victory, men who had been his deadliest enemies were now brought before him. Today,

we would call them war criminals of the worst kind. The only possible fate for such criminals in those days was summary execution. But the Prophet granted them all an unconditional amnesty.

The greatest advantage of this general amnesty was that the country was spared a counter-revolution and all the bloodshed that would have ensued. Had the Prophet punished these men, the fire of revenge would most certainly have been ignited in the tribes all over Arabia. The shedding of Arab blood would then have reached a new peak.

Rising Above the Psychology of Reaction

If a peaceful atmosphere is to be maintained in society while one goes about achieving one's ends, albeit in a peaceable manner, a great sacrifice is required. The Prophet himself set such perfect examples for the building of the nation on the basis of non-violence.

One example of such a sacrifice can be seen in the Battle of Badr. In this battle, 70 Makkans were taken as prisoners of war. All of them belonged to the nobility of Makkah and all were well educated by the standards of the time. Considering that in Madinah, where the Prophet was staying, the people lacked such an education, the Prophet did not order the execution of the Makkans, but instead set a 'ransom' for each of them. That is, each one had to teach ten children of the *Ansar* (Madinan inhabitants) how to read and write. After that they were to be set free.

At that time, one great risk was involved in setting these prisoners of war free. They being leaders of hostile tribes, there was the genuine fear that, once back in Makkah, they would use their freedom to incite the citizenry to prepare for another war. This fear became a reality when they succeeded in provoking their fellow Makkans to fight the Battle of Uhud.

Fully aware of the risk involved, the Prophet had, nevertheless, set these Makkans free. This instance not only demonstrates his love of peace, but also underlines the importance he attached to education. He felt that its importance was so great that it had to be acquired—even at the risk of a future war.

The history of Islam shows that its message of peace is not just a utopian dream, but is a fully practicable programme.

Conclusion

These few points, though brief, show that Islam has a great role to play in countering the deadly challenges, namely violence and conflict, which haunt the world today. This scheme of Islam is not based on mere ideology, but has a genuine history of practical success to back it. The history of Islam shows that its message of peace is not just a utopian dream, but is a fully practicable programme. It is a historical fact that the Prophet of Islam adopted such a well-considered strategy that all his successes were achieved with surprisingly little bloodshed. The toll of casualties in the revolution he brought about in Arabia amounted to only about a thousand on both sides. This number is comparatively so low that this revolution can rightly be termed bloodless. Thus Islam teaches conflict resolution in a peaceful manner. □



Difference
is not an evil,
it is a great
blessing.

SALVATION IN THE HEREAFTER

Through God's Mercy Alone

THERE is a saying of the Prophet of Islam that appears in many books of *Hadith*. In *Sahih-al-Bukhari*, the words of the Prophet are translated as:

It is not your deeds that will grant you Paradise or save you from the fire of Hell, nor will it be for me, except when it is through the mercy of God.

From this and many other similar sayings of the Prophet, we learn that Paradise is not a recompense or reward for the deeds of man. This is not like the situation where you can purchase something from the shopping centre with the necessary amount of money in your pocket. Paradise cannot be gained by means of a “negotiated deal” or compared at any level to a matter of “buying and selling”. It is true that Paradise will not be granted to anyone without the requisite deeds, but in its ultimate sense, Paradise is not granted solely on the strength of a person’s deeds, it is granted by the compassion of God.

The worth of any number of deeds—however great they may be—can never be equivalent to the value of eternal Paradise. In this matter, the deeds of man are only a provisional requirement for Paradise, not a final selection criterion.

This does not mean that one should not bother with good deeds and rely on the mercy of God for salvation. Doing so would only be similar to seeking justification for our misdeeds and this is the wrongdoing referred to in the Quran as ‘wishful thinking’.

Admission to Paradise is not a gift coupon or reward ticket granted for certain deeds performed; it is based on the entire life of man.

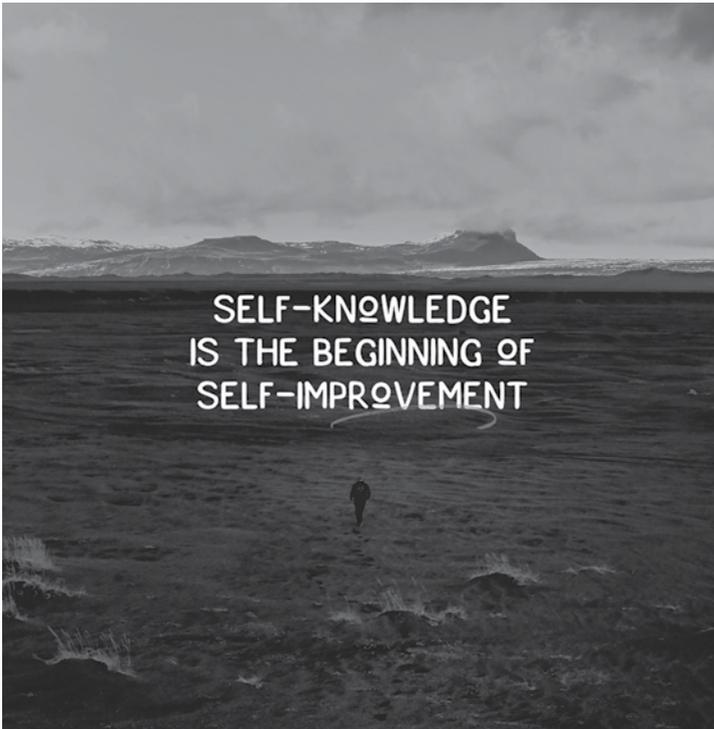
For man, the guidance towards faith, the consistency of good deeds, true repentance after transgression, persistence on the “straight path” without excuse, remaining free of negativity in every situation—there are many such circumstances where man cannot by his own effort consistently maintain good conduct. In such instances, the continued guidance and support from God is indispensable. From this point of

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view, the matter is not just one of entry to Paradise, but it is about the continuous succour of God throughout the life of man—from guidance towards faith till death.

Admission to Paradise is not a gift coupon or reward ticket granted for certain deeds performed; it is based on the entire life of man.

A true believer continually seeks to do good deeds as all his actions are governed by the fear of God. His soul is stirred with the responsibility of being accountable to God for his deeds, so much that he begins to think even his good deeds may be deficient or inadequate. Thus, who would dare to consider his deeds as a “ticket to Paradise”? Instead, a true believer is one who considers Paradise as the benefaction of God and not himself as deserving of it. □



POTENT ENERGY

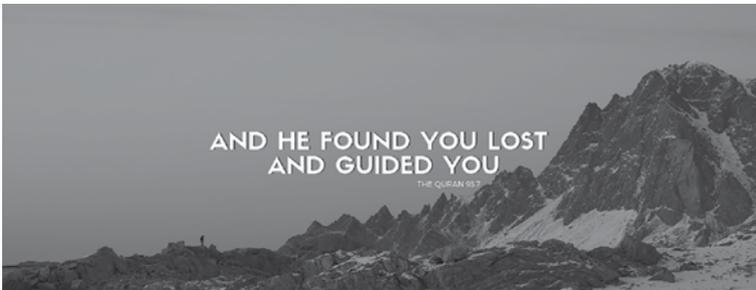
Releasing the Inner Forces

THE atom is the fundamental unit of matter, just as the individual is the fundamental unit of society. If one succeeds in breaking an atom, one does not destroy it; rather, one converts it into a greater force, known as atomic energy. Matter is energy in a physical form and energy is matter in a dispersed form. When the atoms of matter are broken and converted into atomic energy, they are transformed into a force much more potent than in their material form.

So it is with that unit of society known as man. When man is 'broken', his horizons expand vastly. Just as breakage does not destroy matter, so defeat does not ruin man. Matter increases in strength when broken up. So, man, when defeated, gains new, increased strength.

When man is beset by defeat, his inner forces are released. His senses are aroused. His concealed strength comes to the fore and he sets about redressing his setback. Spurred on with new resolve, he devotes himself to the task of regaining what has been lost. An irresistible spirit arises within him. Nothing can arrest his advance. Like a river flowing into the sea, he surmounts every obstacle in relentless pursuit of his goal.

The occurrence of an atomic explosion in matter turns it into a vastly more powerful substance. The human personality, too, contains huge, latent potential. This potential bursts out into the open when there is an eruption within one's soul. It breaks free when some shattering disaster afflicts one. The strings that have held one down are torn apart and begin to vibrate to the tune of life. □



MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE

Utmost Care Needed

EVERY day in our life, we perhaps have some kind of bad experience, big or small. There is no escape from such experiences. One has two options: either to ignore them or to react. The first option is a form of forgiveness, while the other amounts to engagement and in some cases, even revenge.

Which is the better option? We have to decide by looking at the result, for that is the determining factor.

Forgiveness is a better option for it is based on a proven formula: 'Save yourself'. Forgiveness saves you from distraction, it saves your time, and it saves you from creating more problems. Forgiveness could amount to an instant solution to the problem.

In contrast, reaction and emotional revenge means turning the bad into worse, for revenge tends to worsen the problem. If forgiveness is buying time, revenge is just wasting time without hope of any positive result.

If you follow the path of vindication, it fans the ego of the other party, whereas if you follow the policy of forgiveness, it will activate the conscience of the other person.

In such a situation people generally tend to give in to negative thinking but such a reaction would be unwise. The better formula is following a self-oriented course of action. In other words, if you are having a sad experience, don't think about the other party who you feel has wronged you. Think about your own self and adopt a course of action that is better for you.

At all times in our life, we are torn between two choices—anti-other-thinking and pro-self-thinking. Anti-other-thinking makes you descend to the lowest level, whereas pro-self-thinking elevates you to a higher plane of consciousness.

If forgiveness is a full stop, revenge is full of commas. Forgiveness means ending an unwanted situation, while revenge means extending it to infinity. Forgiveness maintains your positive thinking uninterruptedly, while revenge creates negativity. And negativity creates all kinds of undesirable behaviour, in terms of both thought and action.

Some would argue that forgiveness does not always work, and that it is better to adopt the tit-for-tat policy. They argue that forgiveness

only encourages others to take further negative steps against us. To assume so would be unfair, and also, it is against the law of nature. A tit-for-tat policy is not a real solution; it does not end the problem, it only leads to a chain reaction that aggravates the problem.

Psychological studies show that every human being is born with two different faculties—the ego and the conscience. If you follow the path of vindication, it fans the ego of the other party, whereas if you follow the policy of forgiveness, it will activate the conscience of the other person. And it is a fact that conscience always plays a positive role in controversial matters.

The culture of forgiveness helps in the building of a better society, where positive values flourish, where the spirit of cooperation prevails, where disparate groups come together and form a peaceful society. Revenge, on the other hand, creates an environment of mistrust, in which everyone takes others to be rivals. The revenge culture rules out the growth of a healthy society.

To err is human; everyone is bound to do something wrong at one time or other. But, in such a situation, revenge means committing not just one mistake, but making mistake after mistake. On the contrary, forgiveness means undoing wrongs with rights. □

The culture of forgiveness helps in the building of a better society, where positive values flourish, where the spirit of cooperation prevails, where disparate groups come together and form a peaceful society.



SELF-CONTROL
is undoubtedly a
very great strength.

ISLAMIC CULTURE

Embodiment of Peace

THE Quran addresses God as “Lord of the universe.” It does not mention Him as “Lord of the nation.” This shows that Islam believes in unbounded universality and not in limitation. It is the same Quran which hails the Prophet as a “Blessing for the world” and not as “trouble for the world.” This demonstrates that Islam is the religion not of hatred but of love. Again the Quran proclaims: “Peace is good.” It does not say, “War is good.” This means that Islam wishes to create an atmosphere of peace and conciliation and does not condone war and confrontation.

The Quran commands “Read!” It does not say “Shoot!” This reveals that Islam is the culture of knowledge and not the culture of the gun. The Quran stresses tolerance; it does not preach intolerance. This

The real Islam is that which inculcates the fear of God in the people, which diverts their attention from this world to the Hereafter, which fills the people’s hearts with love for humankind.

signifies that Islam implores us to endure the pains inflicted by others instead of reacting impulsively and entering into conflict. The Quran praises a magnanimous outlook, not the attitude of tit-for-tat. This implies that Islam expects a sublime disposition toward others, which overlooks and ignores their faults.

These few references give an idea of what Islam is and what Islamic culture stands for. Islam is the exposure of the divine existence of God. It is the religion of the whole universe. It represents an exalted humanity. A correct

interpretation of Islam is that which agrees with these precepts. Anything contradicting these values can never stand for Islam.

The real Islam is that which inculcates the fear of God in the people, which diverts their attention from this world to the Hereafter, which fills the people’s hearts with love for humankind, which generates the feeling of being well-disposed towards all without any discrimination and which, in its fold, teaches one to become more particular about his duties than his rights.

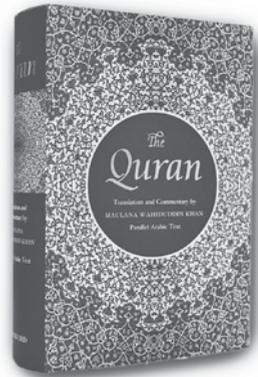
Those whose hearts are enlightened by Islam become the embodiment of compassion, seeking the welfare only of others. Hatred and hostility cannot be fused with Islam and Islamic culture. □

THE WORD OF GOD

From The Scriptures

The Quran is the book of God. It has been preserved in its entirety since its revelation to the Prophet of Islam between AD 610 and 632. It is a book that brings glad tidings to humankind, along with divine admonition, and stresses the importance of man's discovery of the Truth on a spiritual and intellectual level.

Translated from Arabic and commentary by
Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



Ta Seen. These are verses from the Quran, a book that makes things clear; it is guidance and good news for the believers who pray regularly and pay obligatory alms and have firm faith in the Hereafter. We have made those who do not believe in the Hereafter feel their actions appear good to them, so they wander blindly: they are the ones who will have the worst of punishment, and in the Hereafter they will be the greatest losers. You have received this Quran from One who is all-Wise, all-Knowing. (27: 1-6)

When Truth appears before a man and he accepts it without any reservation, he immediately finds himself on the right path. His life becomes righteous in every respect. But, one who is not prepared to mould himself in accordance with the Truth, is forced to twist reality to suit himself. From this develops an attitude of perverseness which is expressed here as 'their actions appear beautiful to them' (*zayyanna lahum a'malahum*). One with such an attitude seeks self-made arguments to justify his behaviour. These so-called arguments gradually take hold of his mind in such a way that he believes them to be perfectly correct. In the light of his false reasoning, his misdeeds appear virtuous to him.

Those to whom God has made their misdeeds appear beautiful are those who are not serious about the call to accept the Truth. As a result of this thinking, they become completely unmindful of self-reformation. They have to pay a heavy price for this tendency of theirs to consider their wrong as right: the path they tread leads straight to Hell.

Tell of Moses who said to his family, 'I have seen a fire. I will bring you news from there, or a burning brand for you to warm yourselves. 'When he came up to it, a voice called out, 'Blessed be whoever is

near this fire, and whoever is around it! Glory be to God, Lord of the universe! (27: 7-8)

Moses left Egypt and went to Midian (or Madyan), which was situated on the eastern coast of the Gulf of Aqaba. He spent eight years there. Then he left along with his wife for Egypt. During this journey, he reached the foot of a mountain which was situated on a peninsula projecting into the Red Sea. This mountain was called Tur in ancient days and is now known as Gebel Moses.

It was probably a winter night. Moses saw something, which to him looked like a fire far away on the mountain side. He went towards it. But on drawing near, he found that it was God's light and not a fire lit by human beings.

There is an ancient tree at the place on the mountain where Moses saw the light. It is said that this is the very same tree from which God's voice was heard by Moses. The Christians subsequently constructed a church and a monastery at this place which till today is a place of pilgrimage.

'O Moses, I am God, the Powerful, the Wise. Throw down your staff.' But when he saw it moving like a snake, he turned and fled. 'Moses, do not be afraid! The messengers need have no fear in My presence; as for those who do wrong and then do good after evil, I am most forgiving, most merciful. Now put your hand inside your cloak next to your bosom and it will come out [shining] white, without any blemish. This will be one of the nine signs for Pharaoh and his people: for truly they are a rebellious people. 'But when Our signs came to them in all their clarity they said, 'This is clearly sorcery!' And they persisted in rejecting them wrongfully and arrogantly, while in their hearts they were convinced of their truth. Observe, then, how evil was the fate of the evil-doers. (27: 9-14)

Moses had gone to the mountain to obtain a burning brand. But after reaching it, he came to know that he had been called there to have prophethood bestowed upon him. When Almighty God blesses any subject of His with a special gift, He gives it suddenly and unexpectedly, so that the recipient may attribute it directly to God and develop in himself the most profound feelings of gratitude towards Him.

On the one hand, the community of Moses (the Children of Israel), though a believing community, had degenerated. On the other, Moses had to proclaim the message of God to a tyrant king like Pharaoh. Therefore, Almighty God blessed him with the miracle of the stick at the very beginning of his mission. This stick was an enduring divine

power for Moses, by means of which nine miracles were performed to awe the Pharaoh, apart from the miracles which were meant for the Children of Israel.

The miracles of Moses finally established his truthfulness. In spite of this, Pharaoh and his companions did not accept him. The reasons for this were their proneness to transgression, their false pride, and their unwillingness to curtail their freedom. Moreover, they knew that accepting Moses's preaching would amount to negating their own greatness. And who accepts Truth at the expense of his own greatness? □



Dr. Saniyasnain Khan Listed in The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims



Dr. Saniyasnain has been a prolific writer of children's books with more than 100 titles to his name. He established Goodword Books in 1999 which has published over 1000 titles. His books focus on Islamic themes and have been translated into many languages. He was awarded Sharjah Children's Book Award in 2013 for his book 'The Story of Khadija'. A trustee of the Centre for Peace and Spirituality (CPS International), he is a regular contributor of articles in various newspapers and magazines. He also hosts a weekly TV programme. This year, he has been included in The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims, 2019, Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre, Jordan. This book is published annually since 2009 and ranks most influential Muslims in the world.

Notably, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, founder of CPS International and Editor-in-chief of Spirit of Islam monthly has been a regular inclusion for more than 5 years in this publication.

ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

The remedy for ignorance is asking questions. (Prophet Muhammad).

The spirit of enquiry is the hallmark of an open society and the above saying of the Prophet aptly illustrates this principle. A culture of curiosity and open-mindedness will foster development in any society by motivating its members to learn enthusiastically and enrich their knowledge. This is because awareness of one's ignorance is half of knowledge, as it becomes a stepping-stone to seeking and finding answers. A questioning mind is like a flowing river that is replenished with fresh thoughts and ideas and continues on its journey.

Why does God not send His angels to stop evil in this world?

This question hinges on a fundamental issue in which 'problem' is termed as 'evil'. In reality, evil has no existence in this world. It is only problems that exist and a 'problem' is another name for a 'challenge'. God has placed us in a world of challenge so that we develop. I found the answer to this through Arnold Toynbee's 12-volume book, *A Study of History*, in which he studied and analyzed for thirty years, 26 civilizations of the world. In his words, the development and evolution of civilizations have challenges at the root. When a group faces a challenge, it begins to work to respond to it and thus a 'challenge-response mechanism' unfolds.

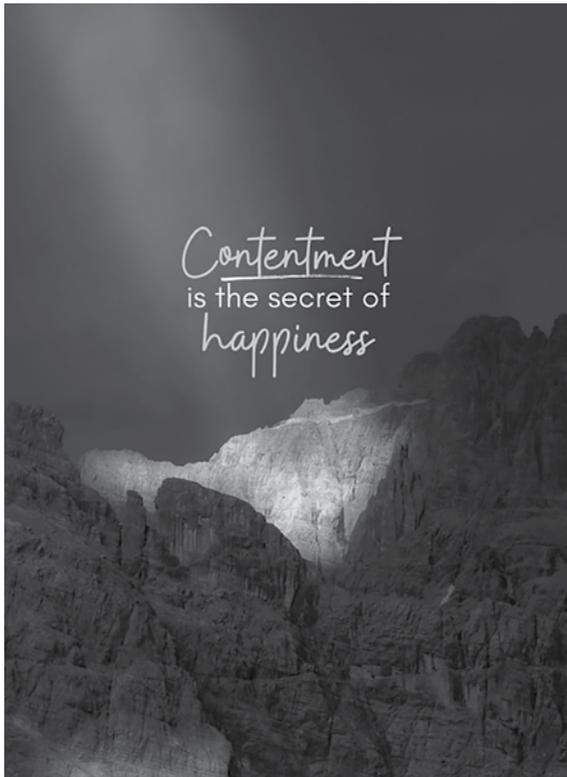
I came to Delhi in 1967 and became the editor of a fortnightly magazine *Al-Jamiat*. The magazine became very successful, but due to some difference of opinion the magazine's secretary developed complaints against me and ceased the publication of the magazine. It was apparently an instance of 'evil'. But because of this incident I gained the incentive to start my own magazine *Al-Risala* (a monthly being published since 1976). This became a huge success and enjoyed great popularity among readers both in the Indian subcontinent and abroad.

So, I did not consider my experience with the secretary of *Al-Jamiat* as an occasion of evil, rather I took whatever happened as a challenge. My response to this challenge has brought me where I am today. I learnt the lesson that when others do not give you a chance, this becomes an opportunity for you to create a chance for yourself.

Why did God allow Satan to tempt us when He knew Satan could tempt us into Hell?

This is a negative approach to the subject. In reality, Satan is a source of struggle. There would be no development at all if there is no struggle. The development of a person's mind is a result of his response to challenging situations. If there were no Satan, there would be no field of struggle left for an individual, his mind would not unfold and he would not be able to tap into his potential. Satanic temptations give a person the opportunity to develop resilience and patience by not succumbing to them. According to a verse of the Quran, man is asked to seek refuge from the temptation caused by both Satan and man's own soul. The verse is as follows:

Say, 'I seek refuge in the Lord of people, the King of people, the God of people, from the mischief of every sneaking whisperer, who whispers into the hearts of people from *jinn* and men.' (114: 1-6) □



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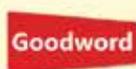
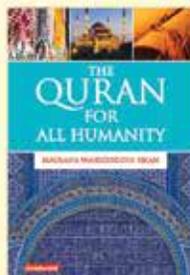
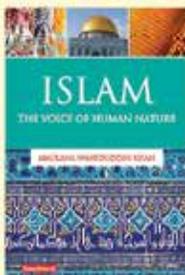
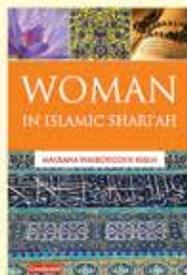
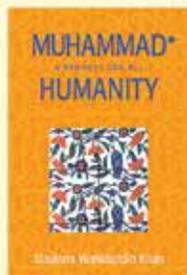
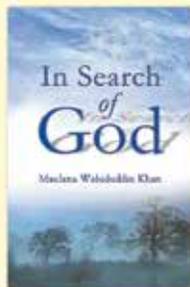
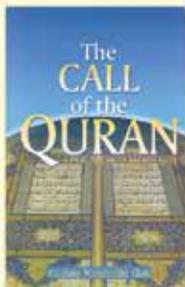
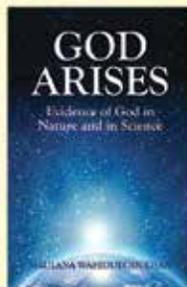
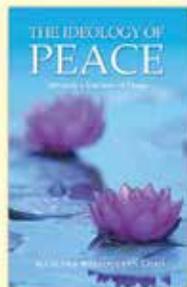
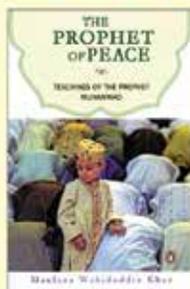
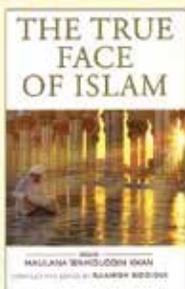
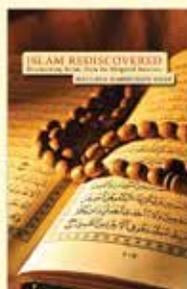
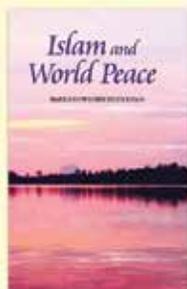
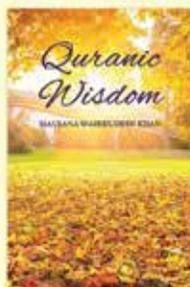
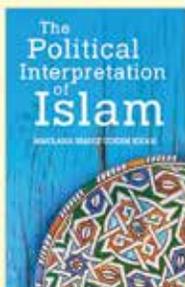
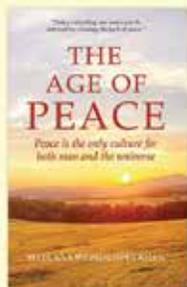
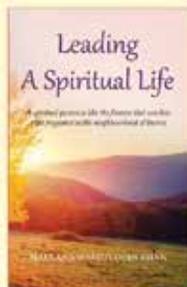
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