

Paradise

**The Final
Destination of Man**



MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

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INTRODUCTION

Man is a complete being in himself. There are two dimensions of man's being: the physical and the spiritual. The physical dimension of man relates to man's physical or external existence, while the spiritual dimension of man relates to man's inner self. Both dimensions are important in their place, but the status of the two is distinct.

'Modernity', or what is called 'modern civilizational progress', has made available to man an enormous variety of things that cater to the material aspect of his being. There has been much 'progress' as far as material 'development' is concerned, catering to human needs, and beyond that, to people's seemingly endless wants and desires for comfort and luxury. Nothing like this ever happened in any earlier age of human history.

However, as far as man's inner being—the spiritual dimension—is concerned, the process has been moving in the opposite direction. There has been

no noteworthy progress on man's spiritual front. It would be true to say that man's inner character or being is now drowned in a sort of extreme starvation. The people's seemingly beautifully adorned bodies hide extremely starved spiritual souls.

It is necessary to understand this contradiction in man's personality and discover the solution; otherwise, man's actual personality will deteriorate rapidly despite all 'progress' in material terms. There is an urgent need to save man from this looming crisis. The most serious aspect of this crisis is that while human life's material or physical dimension might give the appearance of flourishing, man's spiritual or intellectual faculty has been almost totally abandoned. People are engaged in the seemingly never-ending pursuit of sensual pleasures, but few make time to fulfil their spiritual or intellectual needs and ponder higher realities.

This book aims to draw people's attention to this crisis. Along with fulfilling the needs of the material dimension of his being, this book urges that man must also seek to fulfil the demands of the other part of his being—the spiritual dimension. Only then can one develop a truly evolved personality. Only then can one nurture and express his hidden innate potential.

Wahiduddin Khan

21 February 2021
New Delhi, India

CHAPTER ONE

MAN'S SEARCH
FOR TRUTH

IN SEARCH OF TRUTH

Religion remains the only place where the answers to questions about Truth can be discovered.

One question that almost everyone who has come into this world asks himself is: “Who am I?” This question is present in the mind of every person, whether consciously or otherwise. Across the world, for centuries, great minds have been searching for an answer to this fundamental existential question.

The history of human thought is, directly or indirectly, another name for the search for the answer to this question. In some way or another, every person seeks to know the answer to this question and other fundamental questions, such as: What is man? How did man come into being? Where did man come from? Where does a man go after death? What is the purpose of human life? What is Truth, and what is Falsehood?

Existential questions like these are called ‘the search for Truth’. Moreover, the search for Truth has been the biggest concern for man for centuries. Among those who sought answers to these questions was a class of people known as the philosophers. However, despite thousands of years of effort, the philosophers could not arrive at any satisfactory answer to these

questions. As a result, philosophy only became a discipline of intellectual debates, dissensions, and conflicts.

Likewise, in the field of spirituality, people tried to reflect on these fundamental questions of life. However, they, too, met the same fate as the philosophers. The primary reason was that the spiritualists sought truth through meditation in 'the world of the heart'. However, they could obtain no success in this regard. The simple reason is that the heart is just an organ for blood pumping. Therefore, the realization of Truth or consciousness of Truth was not present in the heart. If this is the case, how could those who sought to search for it find it there?

The same thing happened with science and its votaries. Knowledge of science acquired great importance with the advent of 'modernity'. To begin with, people believed that science would, at last, succeed in providing answers to the questions raised in the search for Truth. However, science quickly narrowed down the scope of its investigation and curiosity. In their research, scientists found that obtaining answers to existential questions of life was as impossible for them as it had proved to be for philosophers. Thus, they set aside these questions and confined themselves only

to research physical or material things. In this way, it became clear that it was simply impossible to find the answers needed to search for Truth through science.

In this regard, the final domain was that of religion. The task of religion is (or, rather, should be) to help a man become aware of Truth and to clarify man's position in the universe. Religions came precisely to give man the proper guidance on these matters. However, if we look at the present state of religions, we will realize that they fell prey to distortion later. Hence, there is an urgent need to re-study religions. Religions must be rediscovered in their proper form.

To find the correct answers to existential questions in the search for Truth, Philosophy, Science and Heart-Based Spirituality have failed. After this, religion remains the only place where the answers to questions about Truth can be discovered. In this matter, those who do not believe in religion and those who do are both standing on the same platform, as it were. For both, it is necessary to rediscover Truth through religion. The only difference is that this would be a discovery for deniers of religion, while it would be a rediscovery for believers in religion.

'Religion' is not the conventional form of religion, which is a significantly reduced version. The traditional

forms of religion are the faces that developed in later generations when 'religious' people became victims of degeneration. These days, when a person is 'born into' a particular religious community or society, he knows only this reduced form of religion in the name of 'religion'. He becomes very familiar with this reduced form of religion to a prejudicial extent. Because of this, to know the true face of religion, people must come out of the veils of their prejudices. Going beyond the degenerated forms of religion, we need to discover the true form and face of religion. It can be called the 'Rediscovery of Religion'. Without this 'rediscovery', it will be impossible to understand religion's true importance and meaningfulness.

TRUTH: A STUDY

If a man does not discover Truth in its absolute sense, by his very nature, he continuously pursues his search until he finds absolute Truth.

Some people argue that there is nothing as Absolute Truth. Everything is relative, they say. Every claim to truth is socially constructed. They claim that there are only subjective truth claims, that each person has

their truth. Something that appears true to one person need not be accurate for someone else. In other words, they argue that truth is something relative; it is not something real. One can put it thus: 'There is no full stop in truth, only commas.'

This way of thinking is entirely erroneous. There are no logical or rational grounds for this sort of hypothesis. In this world, everything that man accepts, he does so in an absolute sense. It is how human nature is. If a man does not discover something in its complete sense, he continuously pursues his search until he finds it in that sense. For example, in ancient times, the man knew little about the sun and the solar system. Nevertheless, he sought to investigate these phenomena for thousands of years until he finally discovered their reality. He remained continuously engaged in this search until man arrived at this discovery.

The same happens in all other fields of knowledge, too. For thousands of years, the man was engrossed in research in different areas and is still thus engaged. He keeps up his research as long as he does not discover the reality of something, the truth he seeks to know. In other words, everything has a final form for man—from the stars to the atom, nothing is an exception to this rule.

In man's mind, it is as if everything has an absolute character. This certainty is based on which the process of curiosity and research has continued for thousands of years. Therefore, if a man starts to believe that things do not have a final form, all scientific activities will halt, and the journey of knowledge will come to a permanent end.

The very same principle is at work in our personal affairs as well. Man considers himself an absolute being. He cannot remain alive for a single day if he does not think this. Likewise, a person considers his mother, wife, and children absolute. The system of family life is based on this conception. If this were not so, the whole of human life would disintegrate. Likewise, man considers his property—his house, business, and bank balance—absolute. If he did not regard them this way, he would not be able to manage his economic affairs.

In this situation, to believe that Truth is not Absolute is to think that Truth is an exception to what is a general rule. It would be as if, in an absolute world, the status of Truth is that of an exceptional non-absolute! There is no logical basis for this utterly absurd belief. It would be incomprehensible how every other thing has an absolute reality in this vast world, but Truth

alone is non-absolute, being the sole exception in this matter. It is a logical inconsistency that any intelligent person cannot accept.

It is no minor matter. If one reflects deeply, one will find that man is a dual being—consisting of body and soul. Other than Truth, all things part of human life connect with man's bodily needs. Truth is what is desirable at the level of man's spiritual needs. It would be incomprehensible that the things needed to fulfil man's physical requirements are all absolute, but Truth, which meets man's spiritual needs, is non-absolute in character.

To accept this sort of division, one would have to believe that a vast contradiction characterizes the world—that here, the things we require for our physical needs are present in an absolute sense, but what we need for the satisfaction of our spiritual needs—the Truth—is the only thing that does not have an absolute character.

Truth is man's greatest need. Without Truth, man is entirely incomplete. Truth is such a basic need for a man that we would have to pretend to believe that it was so if it is not absolute. The truth is that not accepting Truth as an absolute is sheer intellectual suicide.

To not believe in absolute Truth is like someone saying that he does not accept his mother as his mother in the absolute sense. In other words, he might say, "It may be that she is my mother, but it may also be that she is not." No serious person can tolerate this concept of non-absolutism. In the same way, a serious person cannot accept to say that to him; Truth is not absolute but merely relative. That is to say, that A can be confirmed and B, too, and C as well, all the way up to Z! It may be equally true that from A to Z, everything is utterly false and that there is no such thing as Truth! No serious person can accept this absurd intellectual jugglery.

A serious person searching for the Truth can honestly admit, "I have not yet found the Truth. I am presently only a seeker." However, no serious and sane person can say that Truth is not something absolute and that there is nothing like Absolute Truth.

Every single thing in the universe in which man lives is absolute. So, a star is a star; it is not an elephant. An elephant is an elephant, not a star. Likewise, everything is, in a known sense, an absolute thing. Moreover, if anything has not been known in an absolute sense, then man continuously tries to discover it in the absolute sense.

The same thing applies to man's personality. By his very nature, man desires the absolute. He wants to live in certainty. He wants that when he knows that a woman is his mother, he should know this fact as certain. In the same way, when he knows a house is his house, he wants to feel sure that it is indeed his. If this were not the case, man would be uncertain about everything in life. Moreover, it is a fact that man cannot live very long and be at peace in the face of uncertainty.

These facts clearly show that the concept of absolute is entirely in accordance with man's nature. Contrary to this, to think that there is nothing in this world that has an absolute character or an absolute reality goes against the basic demands of man's nature.

To believe Truth to be non-absolute or relative is like saying that one does not believe anything true. Such a belief can only make someone a sceptic, but that is not the recipe for a successful life.

NATURE AND MAN

Acknowledging the blessings of the Benefactor alone is the price one must pay to get the right to use these blessings for oneself.

In this world, man finds himself amidst Nature: the sun and the moon, the stars and the planets, the mountains and the seas, the trees and the desert, the birds and the animals, etc. When a man sees this vast world around him, he is utterly amazed.

History tells us that ancient man began to regard Nature as sacred. It gave birth to Nature worship. Taking various natural phenomena to be deities, people began to worship them. As a result, man could not use Nature for thousands of years to progress beyond a point. He could not engage in research into Nature and thereby employ the powers that lay hidden in it. Living amidst nature, he could not make nature useful for himself beyond a fundamental level. They regarded the various natural phenomena as powerful and sacred; people sought to worship them rather than study and investigate them.

Over the centuries, man gradually developed a new understanding of Nature. He realized that Nature is not a god. Instead, it is a creature, in the same way

as man is also a creature. With this understanding, Nature became an object of study and investigation for man rather than something to be feared, propitiated, and worshipped.

Gradually, a new process began, a process of control over Nature. Man's search led him to discover different hidden forces inside Nature. The man started efforts to discover these forces and use them for his benefit.

In this way, a new revolution began. Gradually, it transformed the pattern of human life. In the 20th century, the world had hitherto been hidden in Nature and appeared ultimately before man. In this way, humankind arrived in the modern civilized world.

On the face of it, there is a big difference between these two worlds. If the first was characterized by nature worship, the man began to regard himself as the controller's position over nature in the second. However, there was no essential difference between the old and modern ages that succeeded it. In both these ages, man failed to discover the proper relationship between Nature and himself. In ancient and contemporary times, man remained unaware and ignorant of this important matter.

The fundamental error of ancient man was that he took Nature as his deity, although Nature is, in reality,

a creature of God in the same way as a man. As a result of this error, humankind fell prey to debilitating superstitious beliefs and practices. The man fell so deeply into the pit of these falsehoods that his religion and culture were now thoroughly imbued with crass superstition.

In this matter, modern man's case is just the same as that of ancient man. The difference between the two is only at the superficial level or appearance. In actual reality, there is no difference between them at all. Ancient man's fundamental error was that he had come to regard Nature as God. Modern man's mistake is that he believes Nature is everything. When he investigated Nature, modern man discovered that many powers are hidden: the steam engine is hidden in Nature, like the motor car, the aeroplane, the telephone, the mobile phone, the internet, etc. Inside Nature, an entire civilization is hidden, a civilization that can make man's life amazingly attractive and alluring.

Modern man's error was not that he began studying Nature and establishing a civilization. Instead, the error lay in a massive blunder that he made—he took full advantage of the blessings of Nature, but he completely ignored or forgot the Benefactor, the Giver

of all these blessings—that is, God. These blessings were the creation of God, the Creator. When modern man discovered the blessings of Nature, he fell upon them hungrily. Breaking all barriers and restraints, the man took full advantage of the bounties of Nature that modern science led him to.

It was man's primary mistake. The truth is that to partake of the blessings of God is not legitimate until and unless man acknowledges God, the Benefactor and the Giver of all these blessings. Acknowledging the blessings of the Benefactor alone is the price one must pay to get the right to use these blessings for oneself.

It is no minor matter to separate the blessings and the Benefactor, grab the former and forget the latter altogether. It is nothing but a heinous crime. Moreover, this crime destroys man's life. As a result of this, man becomes rebellious. Instead of discipline, he adopts unlimited freedom as his way. Instead of being duty-conscious, he becomes rights-conscious. Abandoning responsibility, he hurtles off on the path of anarchy. In other words, instead of accepting God as God, he seeks to put himself in God's place. In this way, the philosophy of Humanism emerges, based on the concept of the transfer of seat from God to man.

In the ancient past, man had superstitious beliefs and customs about Nature. It undoubtedly was something very wrong, but it was a more minor wrong. However, the ideology about Nature in modern times is even more dangerous in its damaging effects. Its damage was not just that it led to devastating wars such as the two World Wars, the like of which had never happened before, or that in this age, nuclear bombs were invented, which ancient man could never conceive of. A deadly ill emerged in line with the modern ideology that was much more dangerous than all other ills—the idea of unlimited or unbounded freedom. Despite all the superstitions he was drowned in, the Ancient man considered himself restrained by certain limits and rules. However, modern man thinks himself utterly free from all limitations. As a result, an entire civilization has emerged based on crass exploitation and immorality, which has made human life worse than that of beasts.

MAN'S POSITION IN THE UNIVERSE

The principle underlying the proper relationship between God and man is this: Man's freedom ends when God's domain begins.

Social reformers and thinkers have concerned themselves with the relationship between one man and another. This relation, briefly, is this: Every man is free as long as his freedom does not impinge on, or interferes with, the freedom of others. This concept can be conveyed through the following story:

It is said that when America won political independence from Britain, a man came out of his house, wanting to celebrate his 'freedom'. So he went out into the streets, waving his hands about in glee. Then, suddenly, his hand hit another man's nose. The second man got angry and said, "What foolishness is this? Why did you hit my nose?" The first man replied, "Today, America is free, and now I can do anything I like!" The second man retorted, "Brother, America may be free now, but your freedom ends where my nose begins."

This story clarifies the moral principle regulating the relationship between one person and another. However, as far as the issue of the relationship between

man and God is concerned, the man was not able to properly discover it through his efforts.

Even then, this was no complex matter. The principle of the proper relationship between one man and another tells us something about the appropriate relationship between man and God. In light of the principle mentioned above, it can be said that the principle underlying the proper relationship between God and man is this: Man's freedom ends at the point where God's domain begins.

In this world, all the things man has received are a gift from God. All items are obtained by man only because they have been given to him by God. The same is true of freedom as well. In this world, man's freedom is a blessing or gift from God. It is known that a gift brings a corresponding responsibility with it. In line with this general principle, man's freedom is tied to a necessary obligation. Moreover, this responsibility is that man should use his freedom responsibly and correctly. He should not misuse it.

The improper use of this freedom is to believe that this freedom is man's right, that he is the master of this freedom. "I will use this freedom just as I please, following my desires. I do not have to ask anyone how I should use my freedom," he thinks.

Contrary to this, the right way to use this freedom is that man should try to discover who it is whom he has obtained this freedom from. And then, man should find out what the Giver of this freedom intends by giving it to him and how he should use this freedom so that he can act accordingly. This discovery makes a person aware of the proper use of the freedom he enjoys.

The right and wrong use of human freedom is no mysterious or secret matter. Any person, if he is serious, can discover this fact. But, to discover any truth, the seriousness of purpose is necessary. Therefore, seriousness is also required to find out this law of freedom.

The person who reflects on this question with seriousness will discover that there exists a criterion inside every person for distinguishing between right and wrong by birth. In line with his natural awareness, every person can know which action is right and which is not. Every person's criterion by birth itself is called 'the conscience'. Another name for it is 'common sense'.

In this way, man can learn what to do and what not to do by the voice of his conscience. It is as if every person's conscience is his guide for him. Inside every

person, this warner is present. Experience tells us that this element is never inactive. It never allows man to be heedless. It never makes a mistake in carrying out its duties.

By birth itself, within every person, a specific, powerful emotion is present. It is the emotion of acknowledgement. Every person can personally experience this. Through his conscience or common sense, every person knows he ought to acknowledge this if somebody behaves kindly to him. Man's internal guide recognizes this acknowledgement as a lofty ethical virtue. Acknowledgement is a high level of righteousness, while non-acknowledgement indicates corruption and debasement. In this sense, a person who acknowledges others keeps his status as a human, while someone who does not falls from that status.

This decision of the conscience or common sense is also accurate in the same way about the Creator. In line with the voice of his nature, every person should acknowledge his Creator. He should acknowledge the manifold blessings of his Creator—all that he owes to Him. He should consciously recognize and be grateful for all His Creator has given him. He should feel this in the depths of his heart and openly announce it through his tongue. Acknowledging God is in accordance with

human nature, while non-acknowledgement deviates from human nature.

In the same way, every person's experience that his conscience is a moral criterion that, at every opportunity, is bearing witness. When a person lies, his conscience scolds him. Moreover, if he speaks the truth, it becomes a means for him to feel at ease. The conscience knows injustice to be always evil and justice to be always good. The conscience expresses its displeasure with dishonesty and its satisfaction with honesty. The conscience knows violence to be inhumane and peace to be a great good. The conscience knows hate to be wrong and love to be a great blessing. The conscience rebuts anger and hails forgiveness.

In the same way, when man surveys the world around him, he finds that besides him, all creatures are firmly bound by the law of their Creator. From the seas and the lands to the vast skies, all creatures are, in perfect discipline, doing just what they have been made to do by the Creator. No creature, big or small, deviates even a fraction of an inch from this discipline. From the minerals, the plants and the animals of the earth to the stars and planets in space, all these things are bound by this universal discipline.

The Creator has established this discipline. Moreover, this discipline is desirable for men, too. Therefore, like the rest of the universe, man should become part of this universal discipline. However, there is one big difference—the rest of the things in the universe are compulsorily bound by this universal discipline, while a man should voluntarily choose to abide by it.

For example, all the planets in the solar system revolve around the sun. In the same way, man should accept God as his focus or centre and establish his life around Him. Nothing in this world is stagnant. Here, everything is in constant motion. The whole of the universe is like a vast factory, constantly moving, but we see that there is no sound, smoke, or pollution here. In the same way, man's actions should be such that they do not cause any pollution—moral corruption, strife, hate and the like.

Likewise, in the universe, everything is established on providing benefits to others. Everything is engaged in some beneficial action, from the shining sun to the flowing rivers, from the lush green trees to the cool breeze from the mountains, from radiant flowers to busy insects. Every component of this vast universe is unilaterally a giver. In the same way, man should draw up his plan of life in this world so that he becomes

beneficial to others. Every person should be of benefit to other people and other creatures of God.

In the same way, the study tells us that man always thinks of a particular result and then plans the course of action to seek to obtain this result. Man's thinking is result-oriented. Man wants to engage only in that action that produces his desired result. Man's nature is such that he balks at engaging in any activity that does not help create the desired result. Human nature demands that man plan the course of his life, in the broader sense, under this principle. In the same way, as in the pre-death phase of his life, man plans his actions based on the results he seeks; in the post-death period of his life, he should make the result the criterion. He should organize his activities in the pre-death phase of his life to benefit him in the post-death phase of his life.

The system of this world is divided between 'today' and 'tomorrow', the present and the future. Other than man, all the creatures in this world act in the present. They have no concept of life other than 'today' or the present. The word 'tomorrow' is found only in the dictionary of man.

This difference is a sort of message to us from Nature. In this difference, Nature is exhorting man not to focus

on (or remain concerned only with) his 'today' but to keep his 'tomorrow' in front of him and accordingly plan his life. The success of other creatures lies in obtaining only what they need 'today'. However, man's success is that he should be successful not just 'today' (that is, in the life before death) but 'tomorrow' too (that is, in the life after death). Man's true success lies in obtaining the best place in the eternal world that comes after death.

DISCOVERING THE TRUTH

The critical aspect of the creation plan is that man has been created with total freedom. Paradise is the reward for those who use their freedom correctly.

Man is a truth-seeking being. I have personally experienced this myself. From childhood, I have desired to search for the Truth somehow or the other. In the year 1942, this desire became particularly intense. At that time, my condition was such that I would go off into the wilderness and, in aloneness, would cry out, "O God! When will you come? Till when shall I wait for your arrival?"

Finally, I got the answer to this in a *Hadith* of the

Prophet. According to this *Hadith*, God said: “I was a hidden treasure. I wanted to be known. Therefore, I created man.” (Kashf al-Khafa by al-’Ajluni: 2016) According to this statement, the purpose of man’s existence is to attain a realization (*maarifah*) of his Creator. Moreover, as a reward for this realization, he will be rewarded with a place in eternal Paradise. The period of man’s life before his death is the period to acquire this realization, and the post-death phase of his life is the period to live a life of comfort and peace in eternal Paradise if he proves eligible for this.

This realization of God is no easy matter. It is a challenging campaign. This is because God’s world for man to spend time in before death is full of doubts. An element of doubt is present in every single component of it. In this world, nothing exists that is bereft of doubt. In the pre-death phase of life, man’s task is to draw apart the curtains of doubt and see Truth. Despite doubts, he should obtain a state of complete certainty.

A veil of doubt is placed over everything that exists in the world. As soon as a person takes birth in this world, he finds himself in a jungle of conflicting thoughts. Man is confronted with all sorts of philosophies of life that constantly bombard him, which can leave

him utterly confused. There are dogmas of religions and other worldviews, and each religion or ideology claims it is true. Each person nurses a storm of emotions and desires inside him, which are a hurdle in acting rationally. Everyone is entangled in family attachments and social bonds. Everyone is guided by self-interest. Everyone is so caught in the web of wealth and relationships that he does not know what to do and what not to do.

In such a situation, only someone who can develop himself objective thinking can obtain the realization of Truth. He should develop the ability to lift and remove the curtains of doubt and see Truth as Truth and Falsehood as Falsehood. He should see things as they indeed are. Along with this, he should have the ability to accept what he knows to be true willingly. If he realizes something is right, he should openly accept it, unhesitatingly, without hedging about or making qualifications. Changing the direction of his life, he should make attaining self-discovered Truth the aim of his life.

The means to remove the curtain of doubts that man is confronted with is just one: knowing and understanding God's creation plan. This creation plan explains things so that all doubts are removed, and the

truth is made evident, like the sun appearing bright and shining after the dark clouds have moved away.

Moreover, what is God's creation plan? The critical aspect of this creation plan is that man has been created with total freedom. Now, man's test is that he should use his freedom correctly and not misuse it. The decision regarding a person's eternal future will hinge on his use of freedom. For those who use their freedom correctly, Paradise is their reward, while Hell is the destiny for those who misuse their freedom. One aspect of this freedom is that it produces competition and challenge, without which no progress is possible.

The most debated question concerning man and God in philosophy has been 'the problem of evil'. That is the issue of why there is so much suffering in the human world. If God is All-Good, why did He make such a world where people are forced to face different types of problems and where there is so much suffering?

The reason for this becomes evident after understanding God's creation plan. In some way or other, all these problems are the price of the inappropriate use of freedom. On its face, this price seems to be a very high one. However, from God, we have this good news: after death, when the Day of

Judgement will come, God will hold one to task only when it was proved that man had misused the freedom he had been given. For whatever other difficulties a person may have faced based on God's creation plan, arrangements will be made for their compensation so that a person will think that whatever difficulties and hardships he had encountered while on earth were in line with the demand of justice. We also need to understand that problems are, in a sense, a sort of shock treatment because they can become a means for man's inner growth.

Understanding the issue of suffering does not suffice to form an opinion about it according to one's assumptions or through mere speculation. A better way is to try to understand it in the light of human history.

A study tells us that a more significant incentive is not ease and comfort for man's progress but challenge and difficulty. With ease and comfort, often, man's abilities are ruined. In contrast, challenges and problems often act as powerful incentives for people to develop virtues and scale new heights. That is why one can say that it does not ease but effort, not facility but difficulty, that makes men.

This point can be understood with the help of a real example. In the materially affluent societies of the West, a new disease has emerged, named 'Affluenza'. This is a disease of the materially rich. In 'rich' families, people become intellectual dwarfs instead of intellectual giants. Their IQ is very low. They are lazy and do not do much work. In contrast to them, people who have grown up with difficulty often go on to do great things.

In every period of human history, thinkers and reformers have tried to establish an ideal society or an ideal state. However, despite all their efforts, all of them could only make a non-ideal society or a non-ideal state. Why was this so?

This fact of history can be adequately understood only when viewed in light of the Creator's creation plan. God did not make this present world so an ideal state or society could be established here. The limitations of this present world and the presence of different disadvantages are concrete barriers that prevent an ideal state or society from being established here.

RELIGION AND HUMAN LIFE

A human personality consists of a body and soul. To stay healthy, man requires nourishment for both. Religion is man's spiritual nourishment. It is food for man's soul.

What is Religion? The crux of Religion is that which is generally called 'Spirituality'. Religion is another name for spiritual science. If other science disciplines are about external or physical realities, Religion is that science that studies the inner man.

A human personality is manifested in two ways—body and soul. For the health and progress of both, man requires continuous nourishment. The nourishment for the body is material stuff: food and drink. If someone were to stay without food and drink for a while, it would affect their physical condition. They would die if they faced hunger and thirst for a long time.

The same is true of the soul. Religion is man's spiritual nourishment. It is food for man's soul. Without authentic religion, man's soul would wither. Religion gives strength to man's inner being. Religion is the basis for man's spiritual life. Religion is not another

name for singing hymns and performing some rituals: It is the representative of Truth. Truth is Religion, and Religion is Truth. Every person, rich or poor, powerful or weak, needs Religion. Through Religion, man obtains what can be called the right starting point of life. The man deprived of Religion is also deprived of the right starting point in life.

Religion is the answer to the question, 'Who am I?' It informs man of the secret of creation. Religion gives man the true philosophy of life. It is a guidebook for life. Religion takes man out of the darkness of ignorance and unawareness and into the light of wisdom and awareness.

Religion makes a person a good member of society. It blesses man with a code of ethics with which he can live with others as a good and trustworthy human being. Religion prepares man to become someone who is not a problem for others. Religion makes a man a giver, not just a taker.

Religion is a companion of man in his times of difficulty. It bestows man with the art of crisis management. Religion makes man capable of not becoming a victim of crisis but converting crises into occasions for intellectual nourishment.

Religion is a sign of the intellectual health of a person. Religion makes man capable of converting a negative experience into a positive result, changing a 'No' into a 'Yes'. Religion can help man transform an enemy into his friend.

As is conventionally believed, religion is not a set of rituals and dogmas. True Religion is not that a person is born into a particular family linked to a specific religious tradition. As a result, he becomes connected with some 'religious' groups he identifies with. These are all external things. It is not the reality of Religion. The reality of Religion is inner realization, and inner realization is far above external things.

Religion instils in man right thinking. It shows man those hidden things the ordinary human eye cannot see. Religion makes man capable of drawing lessons from the past and seeing the future in the present. Faith makes a man a superman. It is a means for man's evolution.

Our world has two aspects—one, the visible world, and the other, the world that cannot be seen. The world is like an iceberg. Only a tiny bit of the tip of an iceberg is visible. However, the physical eye cannot see the more significant part. Religion makes the non-

visible dimension of the world a visible thing for a man. Religion assists man in going below the surface of the 'ocean' and entering its depths.

In life, one repeatedly faces occasions when one feels helpless when one begins to fear that one has lost control over things. At such times, religion appears as a hope, a means for salvation. At this time, religion saves a man's drowning ship. Religion is a source of certainty and confidence in all sorts of challenges.

Religion is the source of all virtue. Religion gives man the strength to forgive those who get angry with him, rise above greed, overcome jealousy, accept others, relate respectfully with all, save oneself from injustice, always behave well even with enemies, be a giver, and not just a taker. Religion makes man someone who lives for a higher purpose. It creates within man a principled character. It nurtures self-control and self-discipline.

A religious person is a person who is serious about life. A religious person is an honest person. A religious person is constantly engaged in introspection. He has within himself a self-correcting mechanism. This quality of a religious person constantly makes him a new person.

How does religion generate these virtues in a person? Religion is connected with God, and God is the font and epitome of all virtues. God is the source of all good inspirations.

Religion makes a person God-oriented. Faith engenders God-oriented thinking in a person. It is God-oriented thinking that makes a religious person unconquerable. A religious person acquires a close personal connection and relationship with God. Moreover, someone who comes to be blessed with this gift becomes more powerful than the sun, the moon, the mountains and the seas.

Here, it is appropriate to relate a story that symbolically expresses how a genuinely religious person possesses an indomitable spirit and how even a fierce storm at sea is not a problem for a genuinely religious person.

It is said that a ship set sail from America for Africa. It was passing through the Atlantic Ocean when a massive storm suddenly occurred. The vessel began tossing about wildly. All the passengers but one were very nervous and began running helter-skelter. The ship was tossing and turning almost to the water level, and it seemed that it would soon drown.

In this turmoil, a passenger was rushing about when suddenly he saw a girl sitting very calmly in a corner and playing with her doll. The passenger called, “Child, don’t you know what is happening?”

“What?” the girl asked.

“Our ship is in the midst of a fierce storm, and very soon, we will drown!” the man shouted.

Still busy playing with her doll, the girl replied calmly, “But this will never happen. You must know that my father is the captain of this ship, and he will not let it sink.”

This little girl is the image of a genuinely religious person. A truly spiritual person never falls prey to despair. Even at the height of a major crisis, he retains his senses and balance. He never loses faith and courage. He always lives in hope. He can always say, “God Almighty is the Captain of my ship, and He will not let it sink.”

CHAPTER TWO

CREATION
PLAN OF GOD

GOD'S CREATION PLAN

To be eligible to enter Paradise, there are two things that man needs to do while on Earth. One is to acknowledge the Truth, and the other is to lead a principled life.

A philosopher once remarked that it appears to be that in this vast universe, man is a strange creature. It seems that man has not been made for this world, nor has this world been made for him. Man and the world seem to be mutually incompatible.

Man is born with immense abilities. However, he uses only a minimal portion of these in this present world. By nature, man wants to live forever. However, death arrives quickly without his permission and whisks him away by a unilateral decision. Man nurses an ocean of desires in his heart, but not all of these desires get to be fulfilled. Every man's mind is a world of dreams, but not all of these dreams come true. In this regard, there is no difference between 'big' and 'small' people. As the philosopher mentioned above seems to assert, all this may be thought to suggest that man has come into a world that has not been made for him.

Why do man and the present world seem so mutually incompatible? To solve this conundrum, we need to

understand the creation plan of God. This question of man and the world looking so incompatible arises because of not knowing the creation plan of God. Therefore, we obtain a satisfactory answer to this question by knowing this creation plan.

God created man by His plan. Knowing this plan is necessary for the proper explanation of man. The significance of a machine can be known only when we see the intent of the engineer who created it. Nothing can clarify the machine's importance and purpose besides the engineer's mind. The same is true for men.

The One who created man did so by a specific plan. Moreover, that plan is this—that in the present, non-ideal world, man should spend a period of test, and after this, in line with his actions, man will obtain the right to reside in an ideal world, which is called Paradise, or else will be consigned to Hell forever.

The present world is a period of the test. Here, man is engaged in a continuous test. If he passes this test, he will obtain a place in the ideal world, Paradise, in the life that comes after death. On the other hand, if he fails this test, he will be consigned to Hell. To be eligible to enter Paradise, there are two things that man needs to do while on Earth. One is to acknowledge the Truth and the other is to lead a principled life.

In the present world, man finds himself completely free. However, this freedom is not given to him as a right. Instead, for everyone, it is simply a sort of examination paper. Man has to do this—without any pressure, he should acknowledge the Truth. Without any compulsion, he must bow before the Truth. Through his own free choice, he should limit or control his freedom. Bowing before the Truth is undoubtedly the most enormous sacrifice for man. Acknowledging the Truth may appear to be making oneself small compared to others, but this makes a person arrive at the highest position, leading him to reach the door of Paradise.

In this regard, the second thing is leading a principled life. Generally, a man's character is constructed according to his emotions. Anger, revenge, jealousy, hate, opportunism, etc.— are negative feelings that often indelibly shape a person's character. With a character driven by such emotions, the man cannot enter Paradise. To enter Paradise, he needs to be a person of virtuous character. For this, man should not build his character under external factors but, instead, according to certain moral principles. Only people of honest character can be held eligible to enter and live in Paradise in the life after death. This is the creation plan under which man has been created.

Paradise is that ideal world where a man can find perfect peace and satisfaction and where he will be in the company of those people who make his life truly meaningful. The desire for this Paradise is enshrined in every person's heart. It is this Paradise where man will find accurate and complete fulfilment. With his whole being, man is in search of this very Paradise. Moreover, Paradise is waiting with its entire being for such people. The time is coming when Paradise and man shall meet each other and find the pair made for them.

DEVELOPING A POSITIVE PERSONALITY

It is an upbeat personality in which the lofty desire to search for the Truth awakens. Moreover, only a person of positive character and positive thinking finally arrives at the Truth.

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) was a famous French thinker. He was a champion of people's rule over monarchy. He famously remarked: "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains." (Social Contract, 1762)

However, man has another problem, which perhaps is even more severe than this. Moreover, that is the problem of conditioning. Every person lives in a particular environment. Therefore, every person's mind gets conditioned by his environment, depriving him of the right thinking. As a result, people do not remain capable of thinking naturally. In light of this conditioning problem, Rousseau's statement can be better stated: "Man was created on divine nature, but I see him psychologically conditioned."

When a child is born from his mother's womb, he looks like innocence's epitome. It seems as if an angel has assumed human form. At the time of birth, man has a pure mind. His thinking is the natural thinking that should be the case in reality. However, man is a social being. He has to spend his entire life in a society made by others. Because of this, his mind receives external influences almost every waking moment. It is called 'conditioning'. This process of being influenced by the external environment keeps increasing until man becomes wholly conditioned.

In the quest for Truth, the seeker needs to understand this conditioning, and accordingly, he should set about deconditioning his mind, taking it back to its natural state. He should make himself a man of nature

rather than remaining an artificial man and a victim of conditioning.

Recently, a view that has gained tremendous popularity in psychology is called Behaviourism. In this school of psychology, it is believed that conditioning is man's persistent condition. It is as if a man is a prisoner of his conditioning and that he is simply a passive product of it.

A deeper study of man's personality rebuts this theory. Recent discoveries about the genetic code raise serious questions about the above theory. It has been proven that every person's complete personality is present in the genetic code by birth. Moreover, as the child grows, its personality development, it is said, is only an unfolding of this genetic code. If this is true, it would be more proper to say that the conditioning exercised by the environment is like an artificial curtain placed over man's natural being. It is as if a man's character is like an onion. Inside the onion is a marrow like a pea. Over this inner 'pea', there are many layers of skin-like curtains. If these layers of skin are removed, the inner kernel of the onion will emerge. The same is true with man. Through conditioning, artificial curtains are placed over man's actual being—curtains created by the

external environment. If these curtains are removed, man's true personality will emerge.

Removing these external curtains over a person's being is called deconditioning. It is binding on the person who seeks the Truth to remove the artificial curtains of conditioning that cloud his actual being so that his real nature emerges again.

Religion tells us that man is a unique creature of God. When a human being is born, he is born with a divine personality. In terms of his inner being, he is a true and perfect being. For a person's lasting success, a necessary condition is that he must protect his natural character. He must keep himself established in the natural state in which his Creator has created him. This struggle to remain in this state requires removing all that functions as a veil over it. Moreover, this is what is called deconditioning.

When a person is nurtured in a particular environment, he faces different negative situations and experiences daily. These situations and experiences keep making an undesirable impact on his character. For example, if someone did better than him, he may become jealous. Jealousy now enters his character. If someone misbehaves with him, he reacts with hate. Hate now becomes part

of his character. If somebody oppresses him, that creates a violent streak in his character. And so on.

In this way, a person keeps encountering different experiences to which he reacts negatively. Each time he does so, a negative component enters his character and shapes it accordingly. Thus, man's true character comes to be concealed by a curtain over time. As a result, a person now changes from a natural to an artificial person.

Deconditioning is the reformation of this artificial state of affairs. This deconditioning is a pressing need for every person. Without it, man's character will remain deeply flawed. He will never be able to obtain the position of a perfect character.

The primary means for this deconditioning is introspection. Every person must become their inspector. First, he must closely search within himself and remove every negative item he may find. Next, he must rectify his thinking about these negative items by changing each of them into a positive thing. Then, he must include these now positive items back into his personality. This process is similar to an animal chewing cud, regurgitating it, and chewing it again, making the food capable of being digested. Through deconditioning, every person should similarly reconstruct their character.

Man's mind has two major components: conscious and unconscious minds. For example, when a man faces an unpleasant experience, the thought related to the experience enters the conscious mind as a negative item. This negative item remains in his conscious mind for a few days. After this, gradually, it goes into his unconscious mind, when it becomes a part of his mind forever. Hence, it is necessary that on the very first day itself, or within a few days at the most, one should convert every negative item in one's mind into a positive thing so that when this item, passing through the conscious mind, enters his unconscious or the storehouse of the memory, it is saved in there as a positive item.

This process is a decisive factor in building a person's character. This process determines if a person shall have a positive or negative nature. A person should engage daily to rectify his negative experiences and convert them into positive items. As a result, the items will be collected as positive items in his unconscious or memory storehouse. The character of a person who regularly engages in this process will be an exceedingly positive one. Failure to engage in this rectification process will cause all the negative experiences he has faced to find a place in his unconscious as negative items. The result of this will be that his character will become negative.

Whatever action a person does, be it in thought or

SOME ISSUES TO PONDER ON

action or word, happens according to his unconscious. The personality of a human being is determined mainly through his unconscious mind than his conscious mind. The thoughts, words, and deeds of a person whose unconscious has become a storehouse of negative items will be negative. In contrast, the thoughts, words, and deeds of someone whose unconscious has become a storehouse of positive items will be healthy and positive due to self-effort.

Searching for Truth is the action of a positive personality. It is a positive personality in whom the lofty desire to search for the Truth awakens. Moreover, only a person of positive character and positive thinking finally arrives at the Truth.

SOME ISSUES TO PONDER ON

The right way to plan and lead one's life can only be that which encompasses the eternal life of man in the world after death.

Among the first lessons, a student of Chemistry learns is: 'Nothing dies; it only changes its form.'

There is no reason for a man to be an exception to this universal law. Regarding the physical matter, we know

it does not get extinguished by burning, bursting, or some other accident. Instead of changing its form, it retains its existence. In the same way, we are compelled to understand man as a non-extinguishable creature. That is to say, the death of his body cannot be taken to be the end of his being.

It is no indirect speculation. Instead, it is a reality that is proven through direct experience. For example, the science of Cytology tells us that man's body is a collection of millions of tiny cells. These cells are continuously disintegrating, i. e., dying. The body of a man of average height contains around 26 trillion cells. These cells are not like the bricks of a building that remain there as long as the building exists. Instead, vast numbers of cells die daily, and the food we consume enables new cells to take their place. This continuous dying of the human body cells proves that, on average, a whole human body changes into an entirely new one every ten years. It is as if ten years ago, the hand with which I had signed an agreement is no longer part of my body, yet the agreement that 'my earlier hand' signed remains my agreement! Despite the change in my body, the inner 'me' remains in its actual condition as before. My knowledge, memory, desires, habits, and thoughts remain intact. That is why someone has

rightly said, “Personality is changelessness in change.”
(The Urantia Book)

If the body’s death were the final extinguishing of life, the same ‘death’ happens, in a way, every day with a person still considered alive. Consider a 60-year-old man whom we see walking in front of us. In the sense of the cells of his body, he has already ‘died’ six times! Now, even if undergoing this bodily ‘death’ six times, a person has not died, how will he die from his seventh ‘death’ when he leaves the body for good?

The fact is that man remains alive and present even after his physical death. Man’s conscious existence continues even after that. Death is not the end of life. It is simply an entrance into the next stage of life. It is to die in the present world and enter, once again alive, into the world after death. It is the case that the right way to plan and lead one’s life can only be that which encompasses the eternal life of man in the world after death.

UNIVERSAL MODEL

Submission to God is the best way for man to lead his life in this world. It also guarantees man's success in the eternal period of life after death.

Man finds himself in a vast universe. This universe is like a vast society. Man is only a tiny part of this society. Therefore, man must in his life adopt that model of living that all other components of the universe have adopted in practice. It is the right and natural way for him. In this method is hidden the secret of man's success.

What is this universal model? Observe the stars and planets spread across vast space. Each star and planet move with extreme precision in orbit. None of them enters the orbit of another. Because of this discipline, peace prevails throughout the cosmos. Man, too, should adopt this policy of non-interference while living in society and with others. There should be the awareness that his freedom ends where another person's freedom begins within every person.

Reflect on the world of the trees. Silently, the trees have adopted a beautiful system based on serving others. To fulfil the needs of other living beings, they supply oxygen while they absorb into themselves the

non-desirable carbon dioxide emitted by these beings. It is a selfless, benefit-providing system. It is also binding on man to adopt this system in his life.

Similarly, please think of the mountain springs, with their water gushing forth and rapidly flowing ahead. They repeatedly face massive boulders that appear to be barriers in their journey. However, the springs do not try to shove the boulders out of their way to move on ahead. Instead, they adopt a non-confrontational course. They swirl around the boulders and surge forward. It is, as it were, a message to man to avoid crashing against obstacles he may meet in life. The right approach is to circumvent them with tact and, in this way, be able to continue to engage in positive action.

In the same way, in the world of animals, we see that issues repeatedly arise among them, which causes them to enter into conflict. However, generally, they roar and growl or move their horns about for just a short while, and then they forget the issue and quickly return to normalcy as if nothing had happened. A man should live in a society in the same manner. In social life, certain things repeatedly happen that people find upsetting. The proper way to deal with this is to accept such situations as only temporary. One should not let them take the form of permanent bitterness.

The study of the world of Nature tells us that here, everything gives to others without demanding anything in return. For example, the sun generously gives us light but does not extract any price. The air is continuously engaged in the work of supplying oxygen, but it does not take any compensation for this. Similarly, many creatures and things are involved in serving people without any recompense. None of them presents a bill to the people who benefit from them. One learns that the world around us is a 'giver world'. It is as if the culture of this world is a 'giver culture'. Everything in this world continuously sends out this message—become a giver for others rather than just being a taker.

Man must adopt this same 'giver culture' in his personal and social life. The universe around man is a model for him to emulate in this regard. The secret of man's success lies in adopting this model in his life. The only difference is that this model is established under the law of nature compulsorily in the rest of this world, while man must consciously establish this universal model in his life through his own free choice. To bring one's free will under this universal discipline is, as it were, to make oneself 'unfree' while still having freedom. This submission is the best way for

man to live. It also guarantees man's success in the eternal period of life after death.

DISCOVERY OF MAN

Man's life is divided into the pre-death period for a trial and the post-death period for reward or punishment. Man's success lies in leading one's life in this light.

Man's brain contains around one hundred billion nerve cells. This astounding phenomenon is an indication of the fact that man's Creator has placed enormous abilities inside him.

With this, man has been given a unique thing that has not been given to any other creature in this vast universe—an acute sense of pleasure. Man is the only creature in the vast universe with a very acute sense of pleasure and the capacity to enjoy pleasure. For man, everything can potentially be a source of pleasure.

God has created man with unique abilities. God has also made a beautiful world, Paradise. Paradise is a perfect world where every form of pleasure is present in its ideal form. Man and Paradise are counterparts of each other, as it were. Man is for Paradise, and

Paradise is for man. Paradise is that place where man will acquire fulfilment. A paradise is thus a place where human nature finds its perfection. Without Paradise, man is meaningless, and without man, Paradise is also meaningless. Without Paradise, man's life is incomplete, and without man, Paradise is also incomplete.

Man is a potential inhabitant of this Paradise, but no one will obtain paradise as a birthright or result of being a member of a particular social group. The condition for entry into Paradise is that man should prove that he is eligible for it based on his qualities.

God has made the present world for this purpose. It serves as a selection ground. The conditions of this world have been made so that everything is an examination paper for man. Here, at every moment, man is being tested. God is preparing a record of every person's word and deed here. Based on this record, it will be decided who will be eligible to be settled in Paradise and who will not.

In this world, man has been given total freedom. However, this freedom is not a reward. Instead, it is for a test. God is watching how man uses his freedom. The people who use their freedom rightly, under God's creation plan, will be selected to be settled in

Paradise. On the other hand, those who misuse their freedom will find themselves rejected on the Day of Judgement.

Man’s life is divided into two periods—the pre-death period and the post-death period. The pre-death period is the trial period, and the post-death period is the reward period. The secret of man’s success or failure lies in knowing this truth and leading one’s life in this light.

“SORRY, THIS NUMBER DOES NOT EXIST”

Establishing a relationship with the true God is the biggest blessing for man. Then one receives guidance and develops a spiritual personality.

If you dial someone’s number on your phone and press the wrong button, your call will not be connected to the person you want to speak to. You will not hear a ‘Hello’ from the other side. Instead, you may listen to a recorded message from the telephone exchange, saying, “Sorry, this number does not exist.”

One day, I experienced this myself when I tried calling someone. In this incident, there was a vast spiritual

lesson—and that is if a person seeks to establish a connection with God, but due to wrong thinking, he considers someone other than God to be worthy of worshipping and calls out to him, he will get no reply directly from God. Instead, he will hear another voice telling him that the ‘god’ he called does not exist.

The idea of God is embedded in every person’s nature. Man, by nature, seeks God. By birth itself, every human being aspires to find God. However, in history, it has always happened that people have made the mistake of attributing the status of God to someone other than God.

Establishing a relationship with the true God is the biggest blessing for man. The life of someone who establishes a relationship with God will be suffused with the light of guidance. He will develop a spiritual personality. He will obtain a high level of intellectual evolution. In contrast, someone who gives someone other than God the status of God will wander about in utter darkness.

In the present age, everyone takes the name of some ‘god’ or the other, including ‘gods’, like money and power. Every person ‘gives’ something or the other the status of ‘God’ and believes in this. However, a spiritual personality is not present in the true sense

at a general level. People have made things or beings that are not God, their deity. They call out to some or other ‘non-god’, and in reply, they get this voice: “The number you dialled does not exist. What you consider ‘god’ and are calling upon—that ‘God’ does not even exist!”

The first responsibility of every person is to discover the true God and find out the way to establish a connection with this God. Without this discovery, one is bound to face terrible destruction. Therefore, discovering the true God should be a person’s most significant aim and purpose and the focus of his efforts. It is this that makes human life meaningful. The person whose life is bereft of this discovery is the poorest, even if he owns enormous material wealth.

Discovery of God means the discovery of Higher Truth. Moreover, the discovery of Higher Truth and establishing a firm connection with it alone is what makes man’s life truly meaningful. If you have not had this discovery, your life cannot be said to be meaningful in the true sense.

An issue that one needs to bear concerning the discovery of God is that a person gets this opportunity only in the pre-death phase of his life. In the post-death period, those who had not discovered God in

their life before death will be deprived of this chance. Then it would be too late.

PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

The thoughts that come into man's mind every day build his character. Positive thoughts create a positive personality. Negative thoughts create a negative personality.

Experience tells us that a human being is the epitome of innocence as an infant. However, after growing up for years, different types of corruption creep into his personality and become part of his character. The question thus arises as to how one can develop or purify one's personality or character.

Personality or character development means preserving the same character that one had by birth. A person strives to remove the artificial curtains that later come to drape his character over time until his real nature, free of admixture, re-emerges. The latter way of character development can be understood with the help of an example. Iron is a pure mineral. However, due to the impact of water, it becomes covered with rust. For iron, this rust is just an outer

covering. The rust can be removed if scrubbed, and the iron can emerge in its original form.

This phenomenon symbolically points to a psychological process. An individual does something terrible and then quickly becomes aware of it. As a result, he repents, and his heart becomes pure. However, if he keeps doing one evil after another and does not introspect and seek forgiveness, the impact of sin on his heart is not removed. Consequently, he will soon become an insensitive person. He will start living in evil, and nothing good will have an uplifting or moderating effect on him.

Modern psychological studies have further clarified this point. Man's mind has three significant components present at birth in every person's mind. These components are the conscious mind, the subconscious mind, and the unconscious mind. Whenever a thought enters the mind, it forever becomes a part of the mind. Moreover, as we know, the human mind is but another name for human personality. It means that whenever a thought enters a person's mind, it becomes a part of his personality forever so that even if he tries to remove it from his personality, he will not be able to. Whenever a thought—a positive or a negative—enters the mind, it first enters the conscious mind,

also called the living memory. After this, when the person sleeps at night, by a natural process, the thought automatically travels out of the conscious mind and enters the person's subconscious mind. In this process, man has only 50% conscious control over that thought. The remaining 50% is out of his conscious control. After that, when he sleeps the next night, this thought travels further and enters his unconscious mind. When this occurs, the thought becomes totally out of the person's conscious control.

The thoughts that come into man's mind every day build his character. As the ideas are, so is the personality. Positive thoughts create a positive personality. Conversely, if one's thoughts are negative, one's character continuously becomes more and more hostile.

These days, a great many people are drowned in negative thinking. If a person appears to be talking positively, it may be just superficial talk. However, if you converse with him further and try to understand his personality, you may discover that it is as negative as most others. Most people live in a graveyard of negativity, even though they are unaware of this devastating fact. In this, by and large, there is no difference between 'religious' and non-religious people.

The worst character is a negative character, and the best sort of character is a positive one. Hence, the question is how to develop a positive personality. The proper way is that whenever a negative thought enters our mind, we must finish it at the earliest. Then, we should convert that negative aspect into a positive one through a special method. For example, if you are angry with someone, you must immediately forgive him so that anger does not take the form of revenge and your character is spared from being tainted with negative attributes of anger and hate. If you feel upset about someone achieving something, you can try to bless the person instead. In this way, jealousy will not enter your character.

To immediately convert a negative thought into a positive one—is what we should do. If there is a delay in this, the negative thinking will very quickly enter the subconscious mind and, after some time, the unconscious mind. Moreover, when that happens, it will become such an inseparable part of one's personality that even if one tries, one will not be able to remove it.

However, few people convert negative thoughts into positive ones. Because of this, they pay the frightening price of being dragged down by a corpse-like negative

personality. A negative personality is a hellish personality. If you want to save yourself from this self-destructive and devastating situation, you should practice the above internal reform and cleansing method and make it a part of your daily life. There is no solution to the problem other than this.

FLOWERS AND THORNS

The mind of a person who builds his character positively will be a treasury of positivity. Such a positive personality will find a place in the eternal world after death in Paradise, where they will lead a life of comfort and joy forever.

Man is an eternal being. However, his life is divided into two periods or phases: the period before death (generally, a maximum of 100 years) and the period after death (which carries on eternally). The life in the first phase is spent in this world, and the life in the second phase is spent in the world of the Hereafter. Today's world—the present world—is like a thick jungle. Here, there are flowers and, along with them, thorns. In the world of tomorrow—that is, the Hereafter—the 'flowers' and the 'thorns' will be separated from each other. After this, an eternal

world will emerge, one part of which will have, as it were, only 'thorns' (Hell), and in the other part, only 'flowers' (Paradise). In today's world, everyone has the opportunity to make his eternal fortune. The record of their life in this world will determine whether they will be settled in the world full of thorns or the eternal garden of flowers.

The process of dividing people into these two groups continuously happens in this world. Through the record of their life (or, in other words, the character that they are engaged in the building), each person is declaring, as it were, which of the two groups he is eligible to be included in after his death—the group that will be settled amidst the thorns or the group that will be placed among the flowers. The conditions of this present world are the means for this personality development. Every person is passing through this process. Someone is developing a thorny personality for himself, while someone else is developing a flower-like character. These two groups of people do not appear to be distinct and separate in today's world. However, in the world of tomorrow, they will be separated from each other. One group will be admitted into the world of eternal Paradise, and the other group will be consigned to the world of eternal Hell.

In the present world, every person faces negative experiences. If someone habitually takes an unpleasant experience as something negative, he will develop a negative personality. In contrast, if someone can convert a negative experience into a positive one, it can be an excellent way to create a positive character. For example, suppose someone is rude to you, oppresses you, gets angry with you, and causes you harm. Now, you have two options to respond to this. You can choose to try to do with this person just as he has done with you. So, if he has abused you, you can abuse him back. If he has troubled you, you can also trouble him. If he has harmed you, you can also choose to hurt him. If he has shouted at you, you can shout back.

The person who reacts like this will develop a negative personality. He has sown a harvest of thorns in his heart, so his personality will be thorny. After death, in the next world, he will be resurrected as a thorny personality, and he will be put into the jungle full of thorns—Hell—where he will stay for all eternity, in a state of regret and sorrow.

In contrast is the person who positively responds to other people's negative behaviour. If someone abuses him, he does not abuse him in return. Instead, he

forgives him. If someone oppresses him, he refuses to behave in the same way. This sort of person has lived like a flower among the thorns. He developed in himself a flower-like character. In the next world, in the life after death, he will be allowed to live in a garden of flowers—Paradise.

There are two primary compartments of the human mind—the conscious and the unconscious. Whenever a thought enters our mind, it first enters the conscious mind. After that, it gradually advances and enters the unconscious mind. The unconscious mind is that part of the mind where every thought is preserved forever, although it is not in our conscious control. If you want to have a flower-like character, at the very moment when a negative thought enters your conscious mind, you should activate your thinking process and convert it into a positive thought so that this item is stored in the storehouse of the unconscious mind as a positive, not negative, item. For example, if a hate-filled thought enters your conscious mind, you should diffuse it and convert it into a loving thought. If a vengeful thought enters your conscious mind, you should convert it into a thought of gratitude. If a thought that enters our mind provokes our ego and makes us feel proud, we should change it into a thought that engenders

humility. If you entertain a selfish thought, you should convert it into a thought of selflessness. And so on.

The mind of a person who builds his character in this way will be a treasury of positivity. Such a person will be free of negativity. Only such a positive personality will find a place in the eternal world after death in Paradise, where they will lead a life of comfort and joy forever.

WHY THIS CONTRADICTION?

Man has to use the opportunities available in the present world per God's creation plan and then become eligible to live amidst eternal joy in Paradise.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) was an English poet. He once remarked, "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought." It is a matter of everyday experience. Many people love to hear tragic stories. Popular novels are more often than not tragedies rather than comedies. Likewise, very often, those singers become popular who sing sad songs.

Why is this so? Why is it that sad poems or sad stories succeed in striking the chords of people's hearts?

It is because every person, in practice, lives in a psyche of deprivation or frustration. In such a situation, a happy story seems somehow unreal to them. In contrast to this, a sorrowful tale seems more natural to them.

If you study the issue in greater depth, you will realize that man is a pleasure-seeking being. In the vast universe, man is a remarkable creature. He is the only creature who has an acute sense of pleasure. It is a uniquely human attribute that man can enjoy pleasure. In the vast universe, there are many creatures, but the quality of being able to enjoy pleasure in this way is man's unique ability.

For man, thinking can be a pleasure, as can seeing, hearing, speaking, eating, drinking, smelling, touching, and even walking with bare feet on the grass. However, here there is a strange contradiction. Man has a great capacity to enjoy pleasure, but enjoyment is not possible for a man in this present world.

Once, I went to Kashmir, where, near Pahalgam, a mountain river flowed down from a stream up in the mountains. Its water was pure. When I reached Pahalgam and saw the clean, clear water, I desired to drink it. So I had a glass of water. It was wonderful—better than any other drink. I drank a second glass,

then another, until I had drunk six glasses! Even after the sixth glass, I still wanted to drink but could not. Then, I had a splitting headache. The pain was so severe that I had to return at once. I got back to Srinagar. There, I was to have dinner at somebody's house, and several people had been invited on that occasion. When I reached the venue, my head was hurting so badly that I could not attend the dinner.

The same predicament is actual with all other pleasures. Man earns wealth, obtains power, marries according to his choice, makes a grand house, accumulates many luxuries, etc. However, after doing all this, he knows there is a decisive obstacle he cannot escape from amidst all his pleasures. He cannot derive complete and continuous satisfaction from any pleasurable thing. Even if he has all the comforts and luxuries, and material things he desires, he still fails to obtain complete and long-lasting joy and peace.

Man's desire for material comforts and luxuries is unlimited. However, to use these comforts, he has only a limited capacity. This limitation is always a barrier between objects that give a man pleasure and himself. Even after obtaining everything that he desires, man remains frustrated. Man's bodily weakness, the decline in vitality with advancing age,

sickness, accidents, and death continuously negate his desires. Man obtains objects of pleasure when he desires to use them. However, he soon reaches the limits of his strength and becomes like a spent force. Finally, death buries all his desires and dreams.

This contradiction is not a fundamental contradiction. It arises out of a difference in the order of things. It has been decreed that in the pre-death phase of his life, man should obtain only an introduction, in a limited sense, to his desired pleasures and that in the post-death phase of his life, he may fully receive the pleasures that he seeks. This arrangement is not accidental or coincidental. Instead, it is part of Nature. It is found in the whole system of Nature. In this world, whatever success man earns, he gets in line with this principle of order. In this world, no success is an exception to this principle of order. For instance, a farmer must sow and reap only after that. In a nursery, one must first plant a sapling, and only later can he obtain fruits. An ironsmith must first smelt iron, and only then can he produce steel. In other words, in this world, this issue of order and stages happens in the case of everything that exists here. Everything first passes through its initial period and then reaches its climax. There is no exception to this principle of nature.

The same issue holds for man. Man has been given an unlimited sense of enjoyment, but the objects from which he can derive endless pleasure have been kept in the second stage of his life—in the world that comes after death. In the first stage of his life—in the present world—man discovers his tendency to pursue pleasure. In the next stage, in the life after death, if he had led a righteous life, he would be able to obtain all the objects of pleasure. That is to say, in the pre-death phase of life, he will experience the desire for pleasure, and in the post-death stage, he may experience the full experience of pleasure.

In line with His creation plan, the Creator of the world has given man an initial introduction in this present world to possible pleasures. In this way, He conveys to man the message that if a man wants to experience pleasure for all eternity and in the most total sense, he should create in himself the strong desire for this.

What should one do to become deserving of Paradise? In a word, it is that man should make himself a purified soul. He must purify himself of every negative emotion. He should save himself from becoming a victim of greed, selfishness, jealousy, dishonesty, falsehood, anger, revenge, hate, and other negative

feelings. He should develop a lofty, entirely positive character—a character that makes him worthy of living in the neighbourhood of God in Paradise. He must be transformed into an angelic person or a divine personality.

Man's life is divided into the pre-death and post-death phases. A tiny portion of man's life is kept for the first phase, while the rest—which carries on for eternity—is in the post-death phase. If man's story is seen only in the pre-death phase, it will appear as a meaningless tragedy. However, if man's story is seen in the light of the period after death, it will seem meaningful.

In line with this creation plan of God, a man stands at a very critical juncture. He has to choose between two alternatives. One option is to use the available opportunities in the present world according to God's creation plan and then become eligible to live amidst eternal joy in Paradise. The other option is to lead a life of heedlessness in this world and be eternally deprived of pleasure in the next phase of life.

AS YOU SOW, SO SHALL YOU REAP

An eternal principle is: As we sow, so shall we reap. The pre-death period of life is the period for sowing seeds, while the post-death period is like harvesting the crop.

Man's life is divided into the pre-death and post-death periods. The limited period before death is for the test, while the eternal period after death is for obtaining the results of one's performance in the test. Those who pass the test will be blessed with Paradise, and those who fail the test will be consigned to Hell.

This is the creation plan of the Creator for this world. However, the status of Paradise and Hell are not the same. The actual purpose of creation is the people of Paradise. As far as the people of Hell are concerned, they are just relative components of creation; they do not form any real part of the creation plan.

The world before death is made following the demands of a test. After the period of this test gets over, there will be no need for this world, nor will there be a need for those who fail the test. After this period, only Paradise and those people selected to be settled in the ideal world of Paradise will remain in the universe.

To make people aware of this creation plan, the Creator has made various arrangements. One such arrangement is that He has placed a deep awareness of the creation plan in the very nature of man itself. Every person experiences that he does not obtain complete peace and satisfaction in this world. It applies to almost everyone, rich or poor, powerful or weak. Almost everyone lives in a state of dissatisfaction and dies in this condition in a few days. This general condition of dissatisfaction and frustration should remind us that our destination is somewhere else, that our desirable world is not the present world where we spend the pre-death period of life. This desirable or ideal world is somewhere else—in the Hereafter—and so, we should be motivated to make efforts to obtain it in the post-death period of life.

To make people aware of this creation plan, the Creator made this present world so that no one should acquire a life of complete comfort here. Here, there are many problems—sickness, accidents, boredom, harm, loss, etc. And then, after a short time, one dies. In this way, the unfavourable conditions of the world repeatedly remind man that he cannot make his desired or ideal world here. This world is insufficient to satisfy all his desires. This unfavourable situation continuously compels man to search for the Truth.

In the same way, in this present world, many people undergo suffering, becoming a warning lesson for others. For instance, a person becomes paralyzed and is confined to a wheelchair. Alternatively, he falls victim to a disease with no cure and loses passion for life. People like them do the work of 'signposts' from God. They tell us how unreal the life of this present world is. Such people silently convey that man cannot make an ideal world here according to his desires.

Some people have to face various unpleasant situations in life's training course. On the face of it, those who get the chance to play the role of such a 'signpost' appear to be in difficulty, but for them, there is great news. On the Day of Judgement after death, even their small actions will be accepted by God. Because of the difficulties they faced in this world, they were not physically capable of doing anything significant, and because of this, just accepting the role of 'signposts' destined for them will suffice. Therefore, while they remain in this world, they should adopt patience with all their difficulties. Then, based on observing patience and complying with God's command, they will get admission into Paradise without any additional action. That is to say, simply by patiently surrendering to God's will, without having to do anything else, they

will get admission into Paradise in the world after death.

This news is not something strange or novel for man. Through various means, man has been informed that he cannot construct the ideal world of his desires in the pre-death phase of life. Instead, whoever leads a righteous life here will be able to obtain the ideal world of his desires in the post-death period of life. Paradise will be inhabited in the next world, but the paradisiacal man is being made in today's world.

What is Paradise? One can understand what Paradise is like by looking at the present world. The present world is, in a sense, an introduction to Paradise. It is a miniature model of Paradise. Paradise is the complete and perfect edition of the present world. All the blessings available in the present world are present in Paradise. The difference is that the present world is imperfect, while Paradise is perfect. The present world is not ideal, while the world of Paradise is ideal. The present world is temporary, while the world of Paradise is eternal. There is fear and sorrow, noise and din, and other challenges in the present world, but it is not so in Paradise. The present world is full of limitations and disadvantages, while Paradise is free from these. In Paradise, man will obtain eternal

fulfilment, unlike in the present world, where no one gets lasting satisfaction.

Hell is that place that will be the total opposite of Paradise. In Hell, all those hardships will be gathered together much more than we experience in the present world.

The pre-death period of man's life and post-death are intimately connected. Their relationship is like that of sowing seeds and harvesting a crop. The pre-death period of life is the period for sowing seeds, as it were, while the post-death period is like harvesting the crop. It is an eternal principle: As we sow, so shall we reap.

CHAPTER THREE

GOD
AND THE LIFE
HEREAFTER

CONCEPT OF TOMORROW

A successful man leads the life of 'today' in such a way that his 'tomorrow'—the eternal phase of life after death—is full of joy. He alone is a true man.

In the known universe, man is the only creature who possesses intelligence. As far as we know, no other creature shares this quality with man. Animals, too, are living creatures, but instincts determine all their actions. In ordinary language, we can call instincts the unconscious mind. The conscious mind is a quality only of man and no other species.

According to modern research, the human brain contains some 100 billion particles! In terms of his capacities, man is born with vast possibilities, but experience tells us that almost every person dies with the regret that he could not obtain all he had wanted to achieve in this world. Fulfilment is a deep desire of man. However, almost every person dies without attaining the stage of fulfilment. This tragedy is the fate of nearly every person in this world.

There are different sorts of animals on Earth. They are born and die like humans, but the above sense of lack of fulfilment is not a problem for animals.

There is a reason for this fundamental difference between man and animals. Among all creatures, man is unique in possessing the concept of 'tomorrow' or the future. It is as if an indelible part of man's nature to want to extend his 'today' to 'tomorrow'. He seeks to get in his 'tomorrow' what he failed to get in his 'today'.

The case of animals is different. Animals have no concept of 'tomorrow'. They live only in the present moment. They live only in 'today' and die in this same 'today'. So even though some actions of certain animals may appear to be based on a concept of 'tomorrow'—for example, ants collecting food for the next season—this happens due to their instinctual demands and not out of the consciousness of 'tomorrow' or the future. Man's life has two stages—the pre-death and post-death periods. The former is temporary, and the latter is eternal. This division is so that whatever man could not obtain 'today' in the present world, he may be able to obtain in 'tomorrow', in the world of the Hereafter.

As pointed out above, some 100 billion particles exist in the human brain. In other words, the human brain has enormous potential. This potential is so great that

man's natural lifespan here on Earth is insufficient to use it. Even if man's life here was much longer than it generally is, the conditions of this world are so limited that in a finite world, man would still not be able to use all of the potential of his mind.

Man needs a very long life and a much bigger world for fulfilment. However, in the present conditions, the potentials of his mind always remain grossly and underutilized. Keeping this fact in mind, man's life on Earth seems like the tiny tip of a giant iceberg. A small portion of this 'iceberg' is visible in the pre-death period of his life, and the remaining, much more extensive part of it is hidden in the eternal post-death phase of life. Without accepting this fact, man's life cannot be adequately explained. Human life can only be adequately understood when this fact is brought in. Moreover, when something becomes the only possible explanation for a phenomenon, it is intellectual evidence that this explanation is correct.

If you keep this reality in mind and analyse life, you will realize that the present world is only a temporary place for man. It is not his permanent or eternal destination.

Every person must necessarily face death. Death is an in-between bridge. Death is to move from temporary

life to eternal life. The present world is that world where man is training himself, as it were. The pre-death period is a training period. Here, a man prepares himself for the Hereafter during his temporary stay. Then, after death, he goes to the next, eternal world, where, if he is eligible for Paradise, he will get the opportunity to use all the potentials of his mind and acquire the joy of complete fulfilment. In this second period, only those who properly trained themselves in the first period of life will get a place in Paradise—i.e., in life on Earth. Those who arrive in the Hereafter in a non-trained state will be unable to use the opportunities available there. They will be wholly deprived of fulfilment. No harsher recompense could be conceived of than this.

If a man lives only in his ‘today’—wallowing in the pleasures of this world—and dies in his ‘today’ as well, he leads an animal-like life and dies an animal-like death. But, on the other hand, a truly successful man leads the life of ‘today’ in such a way that his ‘tomorrow’—the eternal phase of life after death, is full of joy. He alone is a true man.

PARADISE: MAN'S DESTINATION

In the present world, those who qualify themselves according to the Divine standards will be settled in the ideal world of Paradise in the Hereafter.

Dr Alexis Carrel was born in France in 1873. After his higher studies, he spent most of his career in the USA. In 1912, he won the Nobel Prize for Medicine. In 1935, he published a book titled *Man, The Unknown*. This book became very popular and was translated into different languages. A commentator remarked about it thus: "This book sums up much of his experience of man and his life seen from the purely scientific aspect."

In this 312-page book, Dr Carrel failed to discover the truth about human life. Thus, he titled the book *Man, The Unknown*. As far as a man as a scientific being is concerned, Dr Carrel had discovered him to a great extent. However, why did he give the book the title that he did? Because of confusion. Dr Carrel found 'man', but his study could not tell him what man's destination was. Therefore, he felt a known man was moving towards an unknown destination. Moreover, this was the actual reason for his lack of knowing the truth about man. In this sense, a more appropriate title

for the book would have been *Man's Goal Unknown*.

It is not the problem of Dr Carrel alone. It is a problem of *all* philosophers and thinkers. It may have appeared that man was, for them, something known. However, the destination of that 'known' man has remained unknown to them till the very end. This intellectual vacuum regarding man and man's destination has afflicted human beings for thousands of years. Speculation about man's final destination only led people to be drowned in confusion. However, this is a life-defining question, and its immense importance demands finding a satisfying answer.

The fact is that philosophers and thinkers were (and still are) seeking man's destination in this very world of today, while in reality, this destination does not exist here. Thus, they have been searching for this destination in the wrong place. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that they failed to find it. This world is incomplete, while man's nature leads him to seek a perfect world for himself. Man desires eternal life, while eternal life is not possible for anyone in the world before death. Man wants a world of unsullied joy, but in this world, there are different types of challenging conditions that act as a barrier to making this world joyful. Man seeks an ideal world, but here

he is fated to live in a non-ideal world. By birth, man is a perfectionist. He seeks a perfect world. However, after all the many efforts, he finds that achieving an ideal world is simply impossible here.

The fact is that, unlike what Dr Carrel suggests, the strange thing is not man. On the contrary, what is unknown is man's destination—the ideal world that embodies man's dreams, free of all contradictions and where a man can live with complete fulfilment forever.

The insoluble problem of man's reality becomes solved when we study a man in the light of God's scheme. That is to say, along with understanding man the creature, one must also understand the purpose of man's Creator—God—in creating him. This is the proper method and approach to this matter. When the issue is seen this way, one discovers that the confusion or lack of clarity about the man was only because people tried to understand man without considering God's creation plan.

A machine is a created thing, not its maker. Similarly, man is a creature, not the Creator. Therefore, to understand man's reality, it is necessary to know the Creator's creation plan. Without understanding the

engineer's plan, one cannot explain the machine. Similarly, explaining man without knowing the Creator's plan to create man is impossible. Without this creation plan, man's life and significance remain incomprehensible. However, after understanding God's creation plan, everything becomes comprehensible. Everything falls into place.

Following His creation plan, the Maker of this world has made a pair to this world. These two worlds form a pair. One member of this pair is the world where we live after birth—the planet Earth. The other pair member is the world where we go after death. In this way, man's life has two parts: the pre-death and post-death periods. A man's Creator blessed him with life, dividing it into the pre-death and post-death phases.

The world before death has been made as a testing ground, and the world after death has been made for receiving rewards or punishment. Because the present world is designed for tests, everyone has been given freedom here. Here, everything has defects and limitations. It is as if this present world is a sort of examination hall. Here, all those 'things' needed to 'write' the 'examination' are available, but the higher 'things' are not present. If a student wants to build an

ideal world in the examination hall, he will surely face only despair and frustration. On the other hand, those people face sorrow and disappointment and seek to build a perfect world in this limited and temporary world of tests.

While we are in this examination hall—this life of ours on planet Earth—what must each person do so that they can obtain the perfect world they desire in the world after death? The answer to this question is that they must use their freedom with the Creator's intention.

For life after death, God has made a perfect world, Paradise. This Paradise is, in every sense, an ideal world. God will arrange for such people in this Paradise who are eligible to be settled there. In the present world, those who qualify themselves according to the Divine standards will be settled in the ideal world of Paradise.

Now, who are these qualified people? These are the ones who, using their intellectual capacities, acquire the *maarifah* of God. Coming out of intellectual confusion, they discover the Truth. They devote themselves to God alone by abandoning worshipping anyone but God. Despite possessing freedom, they

let themselves willingly be regulated by Divine discipline. Faced with adverse conditions, they build in themselves a positive character. They relate with others in the same ethical way they want others to connect with them.

All these qualities are the criteria according to God's creation plan for an individual to be eligible for being settled in eternal Paradise after death. Those people who fail to come up to this standard will be put into eternal Hell, where they will face nothing but deprivation, frustration, and sorrow forever. The case of the people of Paradise is the case of those who avail of the opportunities of the present world in the right way, while the case of the people of Hell is the case of those who misuse these opportunities.

It is said that an opportunity knocks on your door only once. This saying is also perfectly true concerning the issue of lasting success because no one will get this opportunity again. Therefore, those who lead their life on Earth the right way will have won lasting success by finding entry into Paradise—man's destination, while those who live their lives here wrongly will face eternal failure.

GOD AND MAN

Whoever seeks to build his life in the right way should study the Quran and discover the One God, without whom no person can genuinely build his future.

Anthropologists have found that the concept of God is deeply embedded in man's very nature. Every person by birth comes into this world with the concept of God. Consciously or unconsciously, he must spend his entire life with this conception.

Further study reveals that God is a compulsory necessity for man. Man is an explanation-seeking being. He wants to explain himself, his existence, and the environment around him. Moreover, it is a fact that without accepting God, their explanation is simply impossible.

Similarly, because of his limitations, man sometimes feels that he is simply helpless. This feeling can be overcome only by faith in an all-powerful being—that is, God.

Experience tells us that every person lives with unfulfilled desires. It is only God through whom man can hope for complete and lasting satisfaction.

Because of his spiritual nature, man wants to live with firm conviction. The source of this conviction, too, is none other than God.

For his activities, man requires a target to continue his journey towards it confidently. This target, too, he can obtain only through belief in God.

Studies tell us that every person in this world believes in God somehow or the other, even those who seem to be atheists. Many atheists cry out in utter helplessness to God when they face a major crisis. No person is an exception to belief in God.

Now, the question is that when every person believes in God in some way or another, why do they not all get the result one should get if one genuinely believes in God? Even while believing in God, most people's condition is that they are without Divine inspiration and lack peace of mind. Even many who claim they trust God are deprived of the blessings of trust in God. People accept God but feel that they do not have communion with God. Despite believing in God in people's lives, the evidence of the blessings of God is often not visible.

This is because many people worship 'non-god' in the name of God. They may verbally claim that they believe in God but are tied to some 'non-god' or

others in actual practice. For example, someone has seated some living or dead person in God's place. Someone worships a 'sun god' or a 'moon god'. Someone else worships money and fame. In the name of Humanism, some seek to transfer the seat from God to man. Some people regard the laws of Nature as a substitute for God. Similarly, some people believe in a monistic concept of God, where God is viewed as a vague spirit, not a Being with whom one can be in communion and relationship.

If you tried to call someone on your phone and, by chance, you dialled the wrong number from the other end, you might hear a voice that says, "Sorry, this number does not exist." Unfortunately, it is precisely the case with many people today. In the name of God, they are calling out to some or the other non-God, including the things and beings that, in reality, have no existence at all. Their reply is, as it were, "Sorry, this god does not exist."

If we are serious about the issue, we need to discover that system of thought or ideology where the concept of God is present in its pure form. It is an issue for every person. In their belief, every person has made some or the other 'deity' as their 'god'. However, he does not obtain the results that follow from believing in the real God. From their experience, every person

feels that the problem for them is not lack of belief in God but lack of the results of faith in God. It is an almost universal fact that nearly every person can know through personal experience.

The cause of this difference between belief and the hoped-for results of belief can be just one. Moreover, in God's name, a person has faith in some non-God. In this situation, naturally, he will not obtain the results of belief in God despite this belief.

Many scholars have researched this issue and have found the answer to it. One of them was a highly educated Bengali, Dr Nishikant Chattopadhyaya. In 1904, in a lecture in Hyderabad, he spoke about his found answer. He pointed out that although all the religions that had come into the world before the 7th century CE had a concept of God, in later times, their original texts did not remain intact. He said that their conception of God was changed with all of these religions, and their original teachings about God did not remain unchanged.

Islam emerged in the first quarter of the 7th century CE. A unique quality of Islam is that its original text is fully intact and preserved. That is why now, for later generations, the reliable source to know the correct concept of God remains Islam alone. Therefore, for

the person who is serious about this issue and wants to know the right concept of God, there is no other choice but Islam.

The Quran is the only scripture that has been preserved in its original form. According to the Quran, God is One. He alone is the Creator and the Lord of the universe. He is the Sustainer of all the worlds. God is a living Being. He sees, and He hears. Therefore, it is possible for a man to directly connect with Him at every moment and in every place. With His unlimited powers, God can make up for every limitation of man. God is the Helper of man in both his pre-death and post-death periods. God is the limitless Treasure of peace and security for man. In every matter, God guides a man through His prophets.

God is man's Creator and Sustainer. On account of this, God fully knows man's reality. God knows our every need. Because of this, God alone is capable of fully understanding man and giving man all that he needs. It is only such a Being who can be man's God. Other than Him, no being has the power to fulfil man's needs.

The Quran is a reliable and authentic introduction to this same God. The Quran is the only source for anyone to obtain a reliable introduction to God.

Based on their personal experience, millions of people have testified that they have studied the Quran and obtained an introduction to God that their very nature was searching for. They have acknowledged that other conceptions of God did not prove to be the answer to their inner quest. However, when they learnt about the concept of God in the Quran, their heart called out that this was the God they were seeking all along and in whom they secured complete fulfilment.

There have been seekers of God among people of every age. Their very nature set them out to search for God. Religions of every age kept providing men knowledge of God through their search. However, no foolproof system of writing scriptures down and preserving them had been developed in ancient times. As a result, these religious books did not remain preserved in their original form. Finally, in the early 7th century CE, the Quran was revealed. On account of special arrangements, the Quran was made possible to be preserved fully in its original form. Whoever now seeks to build his life in the right way should study the Quran and discover that God without whom no person can genuinely build his future.

THE TRAGEDY OF MAN

In the world before death, we should be content with what we have and patiently persevere in the face of challenges so that in the world after death, we may be eligible for Paradise, where there is the complete fulfilment of desires.

In line with nature's law, man is born in such conditions that his entire life passes in toil. Accordingly, arduous struggle and sorrow are necessary for the Creator's creation plan. No person has the power to save himself from this course of toil in the life of this world.

In the life of this world, sorrow and toil are part of the Creator's creation plan. This system exists so that man can be reminded that the present world has not been made for him as a place to make merry but as a sort of examination hall. The present world exists so that man can pass through different situations. Amidst these situations, it is decided whether a person is worthy of being settled in the eternal world of Paradise or not. Those people who, passing through these situations, do not give the proper and desirable response will be separated and put into the rubbish bin of Hell.

This state of toil remains intact in this world.

However, people do not understand its reality because of unawareness of God's creation plan. By wrongly reacting against it, they fail in the examination of life. These days, big companies claim to be engaged in the work of 'de-stressing'. They try to provide peace to people to halt the mind's thought process. However, this is only temporary anaesthesia, not the proper solution to the problem. The only real solution to it is just one—and that is stress management.

It is common to observe that people who are victims of problems often get engaged in social services. It is just a way of diverting one's mind to get over grief, but this too is not necessarily a proper response to the issue of 'toil'. Social service is a service to humanity; in this sense, it is undoubtedly a praiseworthy activity. However, if seen in relation to the creation plan of nature, an unwanted element might be present in it. What is often a person's psyche experiences misfortune or problem and then gets engaged in social service? "Let no one suffer what I have suffered" may be his primary motivation.

This psyche tells us that man considers all issues simply as worldly issues. To him, all problems relate only to this world. The most significant act, he thinks,

is to make the world a problem-free place. However, this thinking is against nature's creation plan, so it will never fructify here.

Whenever someone faces an unpleasant experience, it is so that he should derive a lesson from it. He should remember the reality that the present world is a world of tests. Here, no one will ever obtain a life of total comfort. Therefore, a man should learn lessons from the negative experiences of the world. Within himself, he should awaken the consciousness that he will never attain the ideal life of his dreams in this limited world. He should search for the perfect life he desires in the unlimited world of the next period of life, that is, in the Hereafter.

In this situation, the true lesson one should derive from unpleasant experiences is that man should remember the Paradise of the next world. He should awaken this thought in himself: "Let me not suffer in the Hereafter that I have suffered in this world."

Prosperous is he who, while in the temporary world, has recognized the eternal world, who in the failures of the present world has discovered the secret of the lasting success of the next period of life.

God made the present world according to a plan that every person should be engaged in 'toil'. But, on the

other hand, Paradise will be free from sorrow in the next eternal world, and only those with whom God is pleased will get a place there. Not understanding this fundamental point about life creates the problems mentioned above.

If you view the issue in the light of God's creation plan, you will discover that the root of all human problems is that people want to make their 'paradise' in the world before death, whereas here, the conditions needed for this purpose are not present. Just as on sand or quicksand, no building can stand; in the same way, in the present world, no one can build his 'dream palace', his ideal world. When man fails to create a perfect world for himself here in line with natural law, he often becomes a victim of negative reaction, leading to further devastation. The right thing for a man to do in this regard is to acknowledge the law of creation and develop a plan for his life in line with it. Moreover, this plan is just one—while still here, in this present world, he should strive to make himself the sort of desirable person who in the world, after death, will be deemed eligible for entry into Paradise. Thus, according to God's creation plan, in the world before death, we should be content with what we have and patiently persevere in the face of challenges,

no matter how harsh they might seem, so that in the world after death, we may be eligible for Paradise, where there is the complete fulfilment of desires.

CULTURE OF HEEDLESSNESS

Consumerism is making people live in intellectual starvation, leading to their complete heedlessness of God and forgetfulness of the purpose of life. Man must become consciously so capable as to be able to ponder deeper truths and live at a higher level of humanity.

In the present era, a particular culture has spread worldwide, called by different names—‘progressive culture’, ‘modern culture’, ‘consumer culture’, ‘entertainment culture’, ‘secular culture’, ‘Western culture’, and so on. However, properly speaking, a more appropriate name for it is just one: the culture of forgetfulness.

On a vast scale, this culture has put human beings into complete heedlessness of God and forgetfulness of the purpose of life. As a result, today’s man is engrossed in different types of engagements. In this way, he does not find the opportunity to even think of the Truth.

In the ancient past, man had many moments when he was free from being busy. He used to spend those moments in search of meaning. He used to contemplate the reality of things. He used to try to understand issues that were beyond the external world. However, the artificial activities of the world have enticed men so strongly towards them that few people now spare time to contemplate the more meaningful questions of life.

One among the many questions about human life is: How can one fulfil the material needs of life? In previous ages, this question was a straightforward one. Its purpose was to obtain the necessities of life—food, clothing, shelter, etc. However, modern culture has dramatically exacerbated the issue. Earlier, the question was how the needs of life could be obtained. However, later, another question became the focus of attention—how can one get life's material comforts and luxuries? The issue went even further, and men began to ask: How can life be as enjoyable and pleasurable as possible? How can man's desires be fulfilled to the maximum possible extent? Arriving here, the man began to focus his whole life only on obtaining material objects of comfort. He no longer made time to think about making his life more truly

meaningful. Because of this situation, we have called contemporary culture the culture of heedlessness.

There are two significant aspects of human life. One is the necessities of life, and two is the purpose of life. An important part of the 'progress' that the present age has registered is that it has dramatically increased the production and availability of material objects, going far beyond basic human needs. These goods have been made to appear very attractive and alluring. As a result, man's full attention is now focused on these things. As a result, the list of one's needs and wants (and many wants came to be thought of as needs) became so long that it appeared to have no end. Acquiring these objects became the be-all and end-all for people. In previous ages, the satisfaction of one's needs happened through a few simple things. However, now, people's list of wants (in addition to their needs) is so long that it seems never-ending.

Acquiring material objects to cater to people's ever-increasing desires has now assumed the form of a veritable religion itself, the religion of consumerism. A deadly result of this is that now, almost no one wants to make time to reflect on questions related to the very purpose of human life. The phrase 'the higher purpose of life' has become unfamiliar. Modern consumerism

has led man to live at the level of beasts. As a result, living at a higher level of humanity has become alien for most people.

For this state of affairs, man has had to pay a hefty price—and that is, his intellectual development, in the true sense of the term, has stopped. Now almost every person's condition is such that if you speak with them about issues related to their profession, they will appear to be 'experts', but if you talk to them on any human subject other than their profession, you will feel that you are talking to someone foolish. From the physical point of view, they may appear very smart, but in terms of intellectual standards, they seem to be dwarfs. Perhaps it will not be wrong to term contemporary consumerist culture as 'beast culture'. A deadly result of the upsurge of this 'beast culture' is that people of today's age have become a victim of intellectual dwarfism.

The condition of contemporary man is such that he now has access to a wide variety of material goods, but at the same time, he has become a victim of intellectual starvation. Today, man's first need is to extricate himself from this morass of intellectual hunger. He must make himself consciously so capable that he may be able to ponder deeper truths. He must

live for a higher purpose than merely catering to bodily demands. He must rise from the animal level and truly live at the human level.

There are two significant periods of man's intellectual history: before the emergence of consumerist culture and the period following the rise of this culture. If you reflect deeply, you will discover that man achieved a great deal in etiquette, refinement, and wisdom before the rise of consumerist culture. In this period, excellent books of intellect and culture were written. However, after the rise of consumerist culture, the development of etiquette, refinement and wisdom came to a halt. In this later period, one can name hardly any books that measure up to the standard of learning and etiquette set by the past.

This difference has reached even the realm of science. Before the spread of consumerist culture, theoretical science witnessed remarkable developments. Many great thinkers emerged in different fields of science. However, after the rise and spread of consumerist culture, the progress of theoretical science almost wholly came to a halt. Thus, scientists nowadays work on topics considered 'marketable' in today's terms. In the past, science was the name of scholarly research. However, now, science has turned into a crass commercial activity.

A deadly result of this situation is that man's intellectual and mental progress has almost completely stopped. Everywhere, you will see people who look very happy and beautiful, but actually, human beings are almost nowhere to be found. Therefore, it is essential to change this situation. Otherwise, humanity will turn into a new sort of anarchic jungle.

The bodies of a man and several animals have many similarities. Their bodily activities are, to a great extent, similar. It is as if animals are humans that walk on four feet and humans are animals that walk on two feet. However, the study of psychology presents a different picture. It tells us that man enjoys a special status in the whole universe. The reason for man's position is just one—and that is man's mind. Man's mind distinguishes him from animals and everything else in the universe. Man's mind is a great treasure. This mind gives man a distinguishing status that is not enjoyed by any other thing or being in the universe.

The culture of consumerism has vastly exacerbated man's physical demands and, at the same time, has almost completely stopped the proper development of man's mind. However, it is the mental component that is man's real being. It is this that makes the man. Without this mental component, man would be just a beast.

A movement must be launched to overcome this problem to revive the man. Once again, a man should be brought back to his original or true nature. A man should be made man once again. Once again, man should be capable of using his intellectual potential for proper development. He should once again become actively engaged on the path of actual intellectual progress.

GOD AND THE HEREAFTER

Awareness of the consciousness of God is deeply embedded in man's very nature. What is needed is to remove the curtain that hangs over human nature. When this curtain is pulled, man will begin to 'see' God.

The creation is evidence of the Creator, that is, God. The creation is such a meaningful phenomenon that it is simply unthinkable to have come into being without someone having created it. In this matter, the choice before us is not a universe with God and a universe without God. Instead, the option is between the universe with God and no universe at all! If we say God does not exist, we are also compelled to say that

the universe does not exist. However, the universe is too obvious a fact; therefore, we are not in a position to deny the universe's existence. Moreover, hence, we cannot deny the existence of God.

The world is so significant that this is proof that its Creator has absolute awareness of meaningfulness. Such a Creator cannot make an imperfect world regarding its results. It is impossible that a meaningful Creator will create a meaningless world. However, despite all its meaningfulness, this world is defective in its present state. For its completion and perfection, it seeks another world. It is this world that the prophets have called the world of the Hereafter.

The world of the Hereafter is not just an article of faith. Instead, it is an entirely intellectual phenomenon. The existence of the world of the Hereafter can be proved on the very same intellectual basis as to all other issues of science.

Scientific Evidence

In this regard, we should first know what 'scientific evidence' actually is. According to contemporary science, scientific evidence of something is not that one must arrive at a position of complete certainty about it. This sort of irrefutable certainty is not

possible concerning anything at all. According to modern science, to prove something intellectually means proving its probability. The theories generally accepted in modern science are accepted thus only because their probability is established and not at the level of observation, that is, having obtained absolute specific knowledge of their veracity. Accepting the structure of the atom as truth is an example of this.

To accept the existence of the world of the Hereafter, too, one will have to use this same accepted scientific method. The use of other methods will, in principle, not be appropriate. Nevertheless, we cannot deny the use of the same scientific method concerning the world of the Hereafter that we regard as valid in other matters.

Developing a scientific theory requires that one begins with a hypothesis, engages in observation, and then seeks to verify the theory in the light of the knowledge one gains from observation. If this three-point formula is employed concerning the existence of the world of the Hereafter, we can arrive with certainty at a supportive existence or probability. Moreover, certainty is the other name for arriving at a probability.

While studying this issue, one fact that emerges is the distinction of man from other creatures. A unique feature of man is that he has the concept of 'tomorrow'—the future. The minerals, plants and animals do not have this concept of 'tomorrow'. From this observation, we learn that other than man, the destination of all creatures is only 'today'—the present. In contrast, man's destination relates to the forthcoming 'tomorrow'.

Man's body is made up of innumerable cells. Every moment, vast numbers of these cells break down. In this way, man's body is continuously renewed after getting old. From this, we learn that man's personality has a being that is separate from his body. Death happens only to the body, while man's spiritual being remains as intact as before, even after the final extinction of the body.

In the same way, inside every man, there exist particular desires. Therefore, it is right to say that man is a desire-pursuing being. However, along with this, experience also tells us that in the case of almost all people, all their desires are never fulfilled. Driven by desires, nearly every person wants an ideal world for himself. However, they die before they can obtain this.

Ray of Hope

The American missionary Billy Graham wrote that he got an urgent message from a wealthy man who asked him to meet him at once. So Graham changed his programme and arrived at the man's house. The man said, "You see, I am an old man. Life has lost all meaning. I am going to take a fateful leap into the unknown. Young man, can you give me a ray of hope?" (The Secret of Happiness, by Billy Graham, p. 2)

This question is not the question of a confident wealthy, old American man alone. Every person who takes birth in this world is confronted with a similar question. The appropriate reply to this can be obtained only in the belief in the Hereafter. If one does not accept the existence of another world after death, this universal question will have no answer.

End of Contradiction

By birth, every person possesses two contradictory qualities. On the one hand, everyone desires to build a dream world, a world per their ideals, where they can spend their 'tomorrow'—their future—in joy and peace. However, on the other hand, even if he acquires all sorts of objects of pleasure, every person cannot obtain this desired ideal world of his.

Boredom, damage, sickness, accidents, and old age are the story of many people in this world. Moreover, finally, every single person has to face the event of death.

Every person is born with the conception of an ideal world deeply embedded in his mind. However, almost everyone dies, taking with him many seemingly beautiful desires unfulfilled before he can obtain his desired world.

In this world, a particular principle prevails. It is the principle of pairs. Here, everything exists in the form of pairs. Everything becomes complete when two of a pair join together. For instance, there are negative and positive particles in the atom. In the world of plants, there are male plants and female plants. Likewise, there are males and females in the world of animals and humans.

This global natural principle can be called the 'pair principle'. This principle tells us that everything makes itself complete on joining with its pair in this world.

In this universal principle lies the answer to the issue of the nature of this world referred to above. There must be a pair-world that complements this present world in the universe. Along with this world, another

world must exist; only by getting this other world will the present world complete its being.

In light of the above observation, the reality of the world of the Hereafter can be recognized as true. The world of the Hereafter is that pair-world joining which the present world completes its being. Without joining this pair world, our present world would be as incomplete as all other things in this universe would be without their pairs.

Our world is a part of a pair is very significant. After accepting this other world, man's existence becomes complete. The significance and meaningfulness of everything can now be seen. Everything now falls into place.

Right Framework

This concept gives us a framework to explain everything in this universe satisfactorily. From this understanding, it also becomes clear what Paradise and Hell are. Paradise is the home of the eternal joy and peace of serious and righteous people, while Hell is the place to punish rebellious people who were addicted to falsehood.

The understanding that emerges in line with this is that the present world has been made as a testing

ground and the next world as a place for acquiring the results of one's actions or performance in the test of life on Earth. Each person has been bestowed with a being that shall never die. However, man's life is like an iceberg, a tiny portion visible above the water while the rest is sunk deep in the sea. Man's lifespan is divided into two portions—one, a small part, which has been kept in this world, and the remaining portion of his lifespan, which has been kept in the world of the Hereafter and will last forever.

There is an 'examination paper' for every person that he must 'answer' in this present world. Everything in this world exists so that man can seek to perfect his character. For example, this present world is full of bitter experiences. It is so that man, passing through these experiences, can prove that he can live with positive feelings even in negative conditions. Only people with such a positive personality will be admitted into the ideal world of Paradise in life after death.

In contrast, people who become victims of reactions when faced with negative experiences become negative. Such negative people will be considered non-eligible for Paradise. Instead, they will be put into Hell, where they will never be able to come out.

Satisfactory Explanation

On coming to accept the existence of the world of the Hereafter, our observations about life obtain a satisfactory explanation. On the other hand, the refusal to accept the reality of the world of the Hereafter leads to many existential questions remaining seemingly inexplicable.

In the event of not accepting the world of the Hereafter, the present world seems incomplete and meaningless. On the other hand, when one recognizes the fact of the world of the Hereafter, the present world begins to appear complete and meaningful. For someone who does not recognize the reality of the world of the Hereafter, the question of many good people leaving this world so that they seemed to receive no reward for their goodness remains a mystery. However, if one recognizes the reality of the world of the Hereafter, this seemingly absurd mystery is fully solved.

Similarly, in the event of not accepting the world of the Hereafter, one may not be able to understand why many people who do evil do not seem to receive punishment for their deeds. However, in the event of accepting the world of the Hereafter, we get a satisfactory answer to this question. Likewise, if one does not accept the world of the Hereafter, one cannot

understand why a man takes birth with the idea of an ideal world and why every person leaves this world without obtaining it. In the event of accepting the world of the Hereafter, this seeming difficulty is fully solved. One can now live in this world with the firm conviction that what he desired but could not obtain before death, he might be able to get in the world after death.

Nothing has been created in vain in this world without a purpose. The sun and the moon or the insects of the earth, everything has been created for a purpose, which they are engaged in fulfilling. There is only one thing that may appear to be without purpose. Inside every person by birth is embedded a concept of beautiful desires. No person is bereft of this. Now, when all the other things in the world have been created for a definite purpose, it is also necessary that man's desires and dreams, too, should have a purpose, a true destination. Man's desires and dreams cannot be purposeless in a universe where everything seems meaningful.

These dreams, desires, and hopes, too, are intelligently planned parts of creation. There is a clear purpose for them to exist, although this purpose cannot be wholly fulfilled in the present world. These desires

and dreams are unlimited so they can be fulfilled only in an eternal world. The name of this unlimited world is the Hereafter.

In this unlimited world of the Hereafter, good people will get eternal Paradise, full of joy, comfort, and peace. In contrast, those who in the present world prove themselves to be evil will be cast into Hell in the world of the Hereafter, where they will have to face eternal consequences for their sins.

The Reality of Paradise

What is Paradise? Paradise is the answer to man's search. Man finds himself in a world where he has the status of a strange and unique exception. Every component of the vast universe is complete in itself. Here, it is the only man who is not complete in himself. Other than man, the whole of the universe is a zero-defect universe. It is the only man who, exceptionally, is defective.

All around the rest of the universe, there is a certainty. However, in the world of man, there is tremendous uncertainty. No fear exists in the rest of the universe, but man is always afflicted by fear and apprehension. In the rest of the universe, satisfaction prevails, while in man's life, dissatisfaction abounds. In the rest of

the universe, all things get what they require, but man is the only creature in the world who does not always get what he wants. The rest of the universe is evil-free, but man, exceptionally, is afflicted with the 'problem of evil'.

Paradise is the answer to this seeming conundrum. The concept of Paradise tells us that all those good things are fully available, too, that are there for the rest of the creation, with the only difference that the rest of the universe gets what it desires in the world of 'today', while a man will get all that he wishes in the 'tomorrow' (the Hereafter).

Part of Human Nature

The issue of God and the Hereafter relates to the unseen world. However, the fact is that this is also a necessary part of human nature. Therefore, human nature knows God and the Hereafter as indisputable truths.

Believing in or accepting God at the level of the mind is only the introductory stage of knowing or realizing God. To have absolute faith in the existence of God and the Hereafter is its highest stage. The purpose of using intellectual proof concerning the existence of God and the Hereafter is only so that the veils of doubt

are lifted from man's eyes and that man is brought to the position where he accepts God and the Hereafter as at least possible truths.

The purpose of using logic and evidence concerning God and the Hereafter is that man be brought to that intellectual level where he becomes ready to accept the existence of God and the Hereafter as the basis of a complete worldview. When a person reaches this stage, the doors of his nature open up. Recognizing the existence of God and the Hereafter as fundamental truths, he accepts them.

Every man has the 'eye' to 'see' God and the Hereafter, but the veil of conditioning lies over this 'eye'. Logical evidence destroys this conditioning or mental block and removes the artificial curtains covering this 'eye'. After this, man begins to clearly 'see' God and the Hereafter. The man now obtains perfect certainty about God, who is not visible, just as a child has complete certainty about his mother even though he has never seen himself emerging from her womb.

The issue of God and the Hereafter remains a topic for logical debate until the artificial curtain that veils man's mind is not lifted. Through contemplation,

reflection, or logical reasoning, man recognizes his God through his inner realization when this curtain is lifted. God now becomes for him the most known of all known things. The work of logical evidence is that it takes a man to his nature's door. As soon as his Nature's door is opened, he discovers God in such a way as if he knew Him from before. If there is a blindfold tied around a person's eyes, it is necessary to provide him with relevant arguments or proof to prove to him the sun's existence. However, when the blind over the eyes is removed, there is no longer any need for arguments or proof for him to accept the reality of the sun. The same is true concerning God. Awareness of the consciousness of God is deeply embedded in man's very nature. What is needed is to remove the curtain that hangs over human nature. When this curtain is pulled through adducing evidence, man begins to 'see' God with even more certainty than when a man sees the sun with his eyes open.

PREDICTABLE UNIVERSE

The fact that the universe is not repeatable proves that a conscious Being made this universe according to His will and decision.

In 1966, I wrote a book in Urdu titled *Mazhab aur Jadeed Challenge* (translated into English as *God Arises*). In this book, it is shown that the universe is very meaningful. Such a meaningful universe cannot have been made without a Maker. One of the book's points is that a solar eclipse on the 11th of August 1999 would be completely visible in Cornwall. I had written this around thirty-five years before this event. Thirty-five years after I wrote this, the date arrived. Per this advance announcement, a solar eclipse did indeed occur at the exact appointed time. There was not a minute difference in the occurrence of this event.

I had not come up with this point myself; instead, it was based on the calculations of expert astronomers. These experts successfully made such an accurate claim well in advance because the universe runs according to extremely well-established laws. Even after millions of years, there has not been the slightest change. Based on this discovery, the scientist Sir James

Jeans suggested in his book *The Mysterious Universe* that the study of the universe seems to indicate that its creator is a Mathematical Mind.

A significant aspect of something being meaningful is that it is also predictable. This quality is present completely throughout the universe, one proof of which is evident in the above-cited example of the solar eclipse.

Some people who deny the existence of God claim that the present universe came into being through chance or accident, not by the decision of any Creator. However, this is not correct. If it is accepted that the present meaningful universe emerged as a result of an accident, the necessary consequence would be that we should also have to accept that the numerous accidents that occur in this world are also phenomena that can bring into existence meaningful things. In such a situation, the 'accident' that supposedly brought the universe must be repeatable. The universe should come into existence repeatedly because accidents happen frequently. If an unconscious accident has supposedly created a meaningful universe once, in the same way, it should happen a second time that a meaningful universe should come into being through an accident. However, as is known, never again has

a universe other than the one that exists come into being after the existing universe did.

According to scientific estimates, the universe's age is around 15 billion. Why has a meaningful universe come into being in this long period just once and never again after that, not even partially? For example, as far as we know, it has never happened that a new solar system has been created once again or that a planet like Earth has come into being, a planet with water, air and greenery and where humans and animals move about. It is clear evidence of creation resulting from a conscious decision by a Creator and not as an accident.

The present world is an exceptional phenomenon. The universe is an exception that rebuts the view of the deniers of God. If the universe were only the result of an accident, it would be repeatable through another such 'accident'. However, when it is not repeatable, seeking to explain it due to a supposed accident is entirely baseless. Therefore, this sort of explanation is not intellectually acceptable.

The fact is that for a person, the existence of God is as certain as his existence. Every person accepts their existence. Through the same evidence and proof, he will also have to accept the existence of God. To accept one's existence and not to accept God's existence is

an intellectual contradiction. No serious person can accept this.

The famous 17th century French philosopher Rene Descartes (1596-1650) said, "I think I exist." This principle is undoubtedly a firm one. According to this principle, a person who is aware of himself reaches the stage of realizing God. According to this principle, it would be right to say, "I exist. Therefore God exists."

The universe is not repeatable; it proves that a conscious Being made this universe according to His will and decision. God is a proven Being. To know that God is a reality is to accept something proven, while to deny God is to deny something proven.

MIND-BASED SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality is about being a devoted servant of God. It is to lead a God-oriented life, to make God one's central concern.

A mother is generally thought of as the symbol of love. However, perhaps it is more accurate to say that a mother symbolises pampering. Pampering is just the name of an emotional relationship, whereas

love is a lofty human virtue. However, because of not distinguishing between pampering and love, the mother has been considered the symbol of love for thousands of years. It is because of this that a mother intensely loves only her children. She does not have the same intense feeling for other people's children or human beings.

The same is valid for spirituality. Man has been engaged in spiritual activities for more than five thousand years. Despite this, knowledge of spirituality could not advance through man's efforts. The reason for this was a vague concept of spirituality. Generally, spirituality is thought of as heart-based, whereas, like other sciences, spirituality is a mind-based science or discipline. In this situation, spirituality knowledge could not advance because its advocates did not know the appropriate reference point for spirituality. It is like someone trying to study the phenomenon of light, considering moonlight to be the source of light. Despite the hard work of even a lifetime, this person will remain unable to understand the reality of light. He wrongly thought that the light source was the moon, whereas the sun was the source of light.

Spiritual development is but another name for intellectual development. There are two things

in this world of ours—consciousness and matter. Development in the realm of matter may be called ‘material development’ or ‘worldly development’, while the development of consciousness is called ‘intellectual development’ or ‘spiritual development’. The Creator of this world has created two things. One inanimate world, the material or physical world, and the conscious world of man. The Creator created both worlds in raw form. It is man’s task to develop the ‘raw world’. He should actualize the potential for progress hidden inside the ‘raw world’ of both the material world and the conscious world of man.

A man engaged in this process on a vast scale in the physical or material world, leading to the creation of a ‘modern’ civilization or the ‘developed’ world. However, as far as the world of consciousness (or man’s actual being) is concerned, it is not progressing. What can be called man’s progress, of man’s conscious existence? One must note that the Creator created man as a conscious being in a raw or natural condition. The task is to transform that ‘raw’ conscious existence into a high-level progressive conscious existence.

The same process is desired in man’s physical and conscious worlds. It is the process of conversion. It means converting a ‘raw world’ into a ‘developed’

world in the material world. As far as conscious existence or man is concerned, it means transforming character, moving from a 'raw' character into a truly 'developed' character.

By birth, man possesses what can be called a 'raw' character. 'Raw' character means accepting influences from every external thing. For example, you get angry when someone says something harsh to you. Someone insults you, and so you are filled with hatred. You saw someone you thought was 'bigger' than you, so you felt inferior. Somewhere you think your interests are in danger, and so you lie. And so on. All such emotions are, to put it simply, negative thoughts.

Every person is born in a particular society. In many cases, their whole life is spent mainly inside this society. Challenging experiences in social life often create negativity in a person, so much so that his whole character may become negative. This process can be called the process of conditioning. It happens with everybody. No person is exempt from it. Thus, every person is Mr conditioned. This conditioning results from almost every person living in jealousy, revenge, and other negative emotions to a lesser or greater degree. Practically every person becomes a case of negative conditioning. There may be a difference in

degree among individuals, but the primary condition is the same.

The true purpose of man's character development is that he should decondition his mind. He should find his every weakness and negativity, remove them from himself, and purify himself to convert his negative character into a positive one. Every negative trait can be converted into its opposite, positive form. For example, one should transform anger into forgiveness, hatred into love, greed into selflessness, pride into humility, non-acknowledgement into acknowledgement, violence into gentleness, egoism into modesty, etc.

Spirituality is the name for this conscious process of inner purification. In other words, spirituality is a process of deconditioning. The purpose of spirituality is that man should engage in the process of self-construction and, in this way, decondition himself. He should make himself a person free from every deconditioning, once again established in the natural state that he was on the day he was born from his mother's womb.

This aim of spirituality has always been there before people. Those who made spirituality their purpose have always stressed that their aim is purification

and reform. They want to transform their inner personality into stronger personalities. They seek to lift themselves from being someone who may be filled with base emotions into a being that lives in noble feelings.

However, history tells us that man could never obtain this spiritual goal through mystical, spiritual practices, that virtuous man could not be born which these practices aimed at producing. Therefore, what is commonly thought of as spiritual 'attainment' from the mystical perspective is ecstasy: It is not spiritual evolution in the real sense.

The cause for this failure is that people could not obtain the very point of reference of spirituality. Before the scientific revolution, man erroneously believed that his heart was the centre of his thinking and feelings. Thus, since the ancient past, the human heart has remained the centre of all spiritual practices.

Meditation and such spiritual exercises originated in the ancient past and were based on the heart. However, as we know today, the heart is only a means of blood circulation. It is not the centre of thought and feelings. Because of this, all of man's spiritual exercises became useless exercises. They could not become a means for the development of man's character.

Man's nature is that if he continuously focuses his attention on something, he experiences a strange joy, called 'ecstasy'. It is, as it were, a sort of thrill. When engaged in heart-based spiritual exercises, a state of ecstasy is produced. Because of their unawareness, people believed this sort of ecstasy to be the goal of spirituality, so 'spirituality' and 'ecstasy' became synonymous terms. Because of this, knowledge of spirituality stopped at a low level of ecstasy. It could not advance beyond the stages of higher intellectual development.

In the pre-scientific age, man developed wrong concepts about many things. After the scientific revolution, man acquired a better knowledge of these. He began to live in a new intellectual age. For example, the moon was considered a source of light in the pre-scientific era. However, with the progress of scientific knowledge, people accepted the moon as a satellite of the earth that reflects the light from the sun and is without any light of its own.

The same issue is true regarding the way man understood the heart. In the pre-scientific age, the heart was regarded as the centre of thought and feeling. Because of this, everywhere, spirituality based on the heart became established. However, in the age

of modern science, it came to be known that man's heart is only a means for blood circulation. It being the case, it is necessary to change our understanding of spirituality.

There is now a need to redevelop and redefine the knowledge of spirituality. It is necessary to connect spiritual understanding with the mind and acquire spiritual progress through intellectual processes because the source of intellectual or spiritual progress is mental progress, not some heart-based exercises. It is time to understand that true spirituality is mind-based, not heart-based.

For this purpose, every person should do two things continuously. One is that he should remove the negative items accumulated in his memory bank by converting them into positive ones. It is akin to the process that some animals engage in, in the form of regurgitation or rumination. Moreover, the other is that every day, an individual must convert whatever happens to himself into positive items so that when they go out of the conscious mind and enter the unconscious mind or memory, they should accumulate as positive items. For example, suppose there is a writer about whom you have a negative image. In this matter, you will have to remove from your mind the negative thoughts

that have built up regarding the author. The spiritual process of this would be first to consider the matter objectively and unbiasedly. Suppose you discover that your negative opinion about this author has been made just out of prejudice—because of this author’s criticism of some personality you hold dear. Then the spiritual practice for you in this matter would be to completely change your concept about this author. It would help if you considered the case a case of academic difference rather than deviation.

Similarly, a spiritual person must examine every negative thought that has entered his mind. He should critique himself thoroughly and unbiasedly and accordingly change his views. In this matter, an individual must be so sensitive that even if he considers somebody wrong, he should search for an explanation that would end his negative feelings for the person concerned.

It is necessary to do this for our protection. It does not mean you should start thinking that all other people are right. Instead, the issue is that you should be able to make your personality a cheerful personality in the most total sense. There should not be a single negative item in your memory or consciousness. Your memory should become a storehouse of only positive things.

Spiritual development is another name for intellectual development. This process of intellectual development starts with the re-engineering of the mind. Every person is born into a particular environment. He is continuously conditioned to his environment. Therefore, man's first task is to decondition his conditioned mind. In this regard, this is the starting point of the spiritual journey.

The fact is that every person is, by nature, a spiritual being. He is born with a divine personality, which has been given to him by God. Because of this, the way to nurture his spirituality is to remove the veils that have fallen over his true nature. After removing these artificial curtains, what is left is called the 'spiritual personality' or the *Rabbani* personality.

Intellectual development aims to develop the mind's capabilities that flow from God's realisation. It is this awakening of God-consciousness which is called spirituality. Spirituality is not any secret or mysterious thing. It is another name for the unfolding of God-consciousness hidden in human nature. It is an issue of conscious awakening in a complete sense and not some sort of vague experience of mysterious ecstasy.

Spirituality is about being a devoted servant of God. It is to lead a God-oriented life, to make God one's

central concern. Spirituality is the condition named when a person's thinking, emotions and actions all get coloured in God's hue.

The fact is that spirituality is a conscious discovery, not some vague sort of ecstatic experience. Man's highest quality is the attribute of consciousness. Therefore, only that thing can become the most important for man, which he discovers at his awareness or consciousness level.

The difference between awareness and ecstasy is that the former is the name for a known intellectual condition, while the latter is for a vague state of the heart. To consider spirituality to be an ecstatic experience is to belittle spirituality. Higher spirituality becomes a known experience at the level of the mind man. True spirituality is obtained by activating conscious awareness—mind-based spirituality. There is no such thing as the experience of ecstasy or heart-based spirituality. Spirituality is an intellectual journey that takes one from the material world to a world of meaning. This journey takes place at the internal level.

PARADISE FOR POSITIVE PERSONALITIES

Paradise is only for the individual who develops a positive personality by abandoning a life of unawareness and leading a conscious life in this world of test.

According to the Quran, Paradise is for one who purifies his soul in this present world and reaches the world hereafter with a refined, positive personality. (20:76) It has been called *tazkiyah* in the Quran. Through *tazkiyah*, an individual develops a spiritual and intellectual personality in this world to be held deserving of entry into Paradise in the world Hereafter. It means abandoning a life of unawareness and leading a life ruled by one's consciousness. When he faces any hurdles, he must not resort to expediency. When desires arise within him, he must crush them, and when he is overtaken by arrogance, he should be able to overcome his overweening pride.

Tazkiyah is a continuous process that goes on day in and day out. When it does not happen in this way, a Hadith describes the result: "The heart becomes covered with rust, just like iron when it comes in contact with water." A question was asked: "O Prophet! What is

the way to purify or clean one's heart?" The Prophet replied, "Remembering death often and studying the Quran." (Al-Qudhai's Musnad al-Shihab, Hadith No. 1178)

This tradition of the Prophet tells us of psychological reality. In the context of the society he lives in, man repeatedly has to undergo such experiences as produce negative feelings within him, such as anger, hatred, violence, revenge, etc. A man ought to bury these feelings instantly, for if he fails to do so, they will become a permanent presence in the human mind, and a time will come when it will be almost impossible to eliminate them.

There are two significant parts of the human mind, the conscious and the unconscious. It is quite natural for negative feelings to, first of all, enter the conscious part of the mind. If such feelings are not immediately cast out from the mind, they gradually reach the unconscious part of the mind, where it becomes difficult to eradicate them. Therefore, a man should always remain vigilant about this. At all times, he should keep converting his negativity into positivity. He must de-condition his conditioned mind to purify and keep it free from pollution. The only way of purification, or de-conditioning, is to repeatedly

remind himself of death and reflect on the purpose of life in the light of the Quran.

The present world has been created to prepare individuals who have developed intellectually positive personalities. Such personalities are developed through mind-based spirituality, through one's reflection and introspection. Therefore, such intellectually developed personalities will be deserving of entry into Paradise. Without this, one can never gain access to the eternal heavenly abode.

CHAPTER FOUR

PARADISE:
MAN'S FINAL
DESTINATION

ADVANCE INTRODUCTION TO PARADISE

If man's desires are taken positively, they can be decisive factors for actions to help a person become eligible for Paradise.

Man is born with innumerable desires. He considers these desires among the most precious treasures of his life. To fulfil them, he runs about his whole life. Finally, every man discovers that he has failed to fulfil all his desires. Almost every person's fate is that he is dissatisfied both before fulfilling his desires and after apparently fulfilling them. It is the condition of nearly every person.

It is because man's desires are unlimited while this world is limited. This difference makes it impossible for a person to construct the world of his dreams in this world. In this world, the fate of every such person finally becomes a graveyard of unfulfilled dreams. At the same time, human desires can play a positive role. These desires are an initial introduction to Paradise. They inform us how joyful the world of Paradise will be, where all beautiful desires will be fulfilled completely. In the present world, the secret of success is desire management rather than the futile effort to seek to

fulfil all one's desires. The present world does not exist for building Paradise here. It exists only so that, through righteous living, man can prove himself eligible for entry into Paradise. If man's desires are taken positively, they can be decisive factors for actions to help a person become eligible for Paradise. Almost every person's life relates just to one story—and that is, chasing after one's desires and dying without them all being fulfilled. For the fulfilment of all of one's desires, so many factors are needed that to put them together is not within the power of man, even if he lives a very long life and all the wealth and power of the world come into his control. For example, a man can build a house but cannot stop an earthquake from happening and destroying it within seconds. A man can take great care of his body to make it physically strong, but he cannot change the compulsory law of death. Man can accumulate all sorts of pleasures and luxuries, but he cannot put an end to their limitations when deriving pleasure from them. Man can collect all kinds of comfort objects, but he cannot change the law according to which man is susceptible to sickness and accidents.

This experience proves that what is in man's control is only action, not the results of his actions. Man has the

freedom to act but cannot perform the steps needed to build a new, ideal world by himself. Only God, the Creator, can create a world. In such a situation, a person who engages in actions in the hope of thereby building an ideal world for himself in this world is only giving evidence of being unrealistic, and it is a fact that no positive result can be produced through unrealistic thinking.

If we keep this before us and reflect, we may realize that man should be willing to accept a fundamental division between himself and the Creator. He should recognize that engaging in action is man's domain while producing its results is the Creator's domain. In line with this, the period before man's death is, for him, the period for action, while the period after death is the period of obtaining the result of his actions from God.

If man acknowledges this reality, he will simultaneously obtain two benefits. Firstly, his tension will get over forever. Tension is the name of the difference between action and its result. Moreover, when this difference is eliminated, tension is automatically relieved. The second benefit of this would be that man would find a definite guarantee that if he leads a genuinely righteous life, after death, he will obtain the desired

result of his action in such a way that he will become the owner of an ever-verdant garden of joy—eternal Paradise.

PARADISE

THE IDEAL WORLD OF THE HEREAFTER

The time and energy of every human being should be used to discover the Divine criterion to enter eternal Paradise and plan their life in line with this discovery so that when death comes to them, they are declared qualified candidates for God's eternal Paradise.

Some years ago, a magazine published an article titled 'The Road to Paradise'. In the article, the authors related that they had travelled to a beautiful mountainous region where Nature's abundant beauty was. However, travelling in that area, they also repeatedly faced bitter experiences. This area seemed very beautiful from afar, but one faced many challenges travelling on the roads there. Explaining this, the author wrote: 'Every Paradise has its serpent'.

This symbol is based on a story from the Bible. According to this story, a serpent was also present in the Paradise where Adam had been placed. However,

this story is not true. There is no 'serpent' in the eternal Paradise made by God. However, in all the temporary 'paradises' that man seeks to make on his own in this world, 'serpents' do exist. No 'paradise' made by man is free of 'serpents'. Difficulties and challenges beset the human world.

The eternal Paradise made by God is an ideal abode. There is neither any sorrow, regret of the past, fear, or apprehension about the future. There are neither disadvantages nor limitations nor any pollution, strife, or violence. It is, in the total sense, an ideal realm.

This ideal Paradise has been made so that selected people can be settled there. Those people who measure up to the high Divine standards will be given this Paradise in the period after death as a reward. They will live there forever and will never want to come out.

Man is a seeker of Paradise by birth. Every person, impelled by his nature, seeks this Paradise. He is restless to obtain it. In the world before death, everyone is occupied with trying to build the 'paradise' of their dreams here on Earth. The biggest concern of every person is to build the 'paradise' that exists in their dreams and spend their lives in it.

However, what every person gets in actual practice is only struggle and wasted effort. No one obtains the

result that they had so desperately hankered after. People put in all their efforts to get the 'paradise' of their dreams here on Earth, but very soon, they suddenly die and head off towards the next world, taking all their unfulfilled dreams!

The biggest secret of success is knowing that our life has two pre-death and post-death stages. No one can obtain in the pre-death stage of life what the Creator has placed for the post-death stage. One can get Paradise only in life after death. For every person, the highest form of intelligence is to know these two stages and lead their lives accordingly. The world of 'today' is the place to make oneself eligible for Paradise, and the world of 'tomorrow' is the place to find the result of one's life based on how we fared in the world of 'today'. Every person's task is to regard the life of 'today' as an opportunity to prepare for the eternal Hereafter. Their time and energy should be used to discover the Divine criterion to enter eternal Paradise and plan their life in line with this discovery so that they are declared a qualified candidate for God's eternal Paradise when death comes to them.

THE DESTINY OF MAN

Man's life has been structured based on the principle of action and reward. The world before death is the period for a man to sow seeds, while the world after death is the period to obtain the results of this sowing.

Every person builds for himself a world of desires. He spends all his time on this project, so much so that the last moment of his short life arrives, and he departs from this world in utter frustration because he failed to obtain all he had wanted.

Why is this so? In this vast universe, man is the only creature who possesses innumerable desires. Will these desires never be fulfilled, and will every person be buried in the graveyard of their desires? Every person harbours dreams of a beautiful world. Does this world of dreams exist only to remain mere dreams and never come true? Every person nurtures a garden of hope in their breast, but no one finds happiness in entering that beautiful garden. Why is there this contradiction in Nature?

Besides man, nowhere is this contradiction present in the vast universe. Minerals, plants, and animals—their worlds are entirely free of such a contradiction.

So then, why is this contradiction found only in man's life?

This is because there is an essential difference between man and the rest of the universe. The difference is that man's life is marked by the pre-death and post-death stages. In contrast, all other things in the universe have only one stage—i.e., they come into existence, and then one day, they get extinguished. So first, they take birth, then, after some time, they die and are eliminated forever.

The fact is that the ideal things that man wants to obtain in the first stage of his life can be obtained only in the second stage. Moreover, what has been destined for him in the second stage of life, no one can find that in the first stage. In this case, a special law for man does not apply to other things and beings in the universe. Man's life has been structured based on the principle of action and reward. That is to say, he must engage in activity in the pre-death stage of his life, whose result he will obtain in the post-death stage.

Knowledge of this law is crucial in understanding the true nature of human life. An understanding of this law makes man's life meaningful. This law provides perfect answers to all existential questions. After knowing this law, one gets a satisfactory explanation

of the whole of human life. According to this law, the world before death is the period for a man to sow seeds, while the world after death is the period to obtain the results of this sowing: a rich harvest of flowers and fruits or a jungle of thorns, as the case might be. A man should refrain from making a useless effort to obtain in the present world itself the flowers and fruits—i. e., Paradise—that can be had only in the Hereafter. Instead, he should focus all his attention on sowing good seeds—through righteous actions, in the best possible way. If he does this, in this world of test, he will obtain all that he could not get in the world before death in the form of Paradise in the Hereafter.

MIRAGE OF MATERIAL PROGRESS

You can lead a truly successful life in this world only if your efforts and the direction you are moving are according to God's creation plan.

Material 'failure' is as meaningless as material 'success' in the present world. Examples of this continuously come to the fore in different forms. For instance, some years ago, a young woman put a

noose around her neck and committed suicide, even though she had become a very successful model. The following words apply to herself: "Being famous is like living in a bubble that can burst any moment." In another case, some years ago, an interview with one of India's 'biggest' industrialists was published in a newspaper. Although he was one of India's 'richest' persons, wealth did not give him joy. Despite possessing much material wealth, he was leading an utterly non-peaceful life.

Many other people have money, fame, and power but are not happy. Unfortunately, these things cannot give you lasting happiness.

In their mind, every person has a beautiful image of a joy-filled world—Paradise. So, spending all their energies and time, they try to accumulate as much money as possible to construct this world of their dreams. However, after attaining all the material things they hankered, they realize their failure to find real peace in the 'paradise' they have made for themselves.

It is the condition of almost every person. Nearly every man is buried in the beautiful graveyard that he has built. Their desired ideal world is a world of unlimited comforts, and such a world cannot be made

in the present limited world. It can be built only in the world that comes after death. This next world is unlimited, as well as eternal.

In this world, if any person wants to build a successful life for himself, the first thing that he ought to know is God's creation plan. You can lead a truly successful life in this world only if your efforts and the direction you are moving are according to God's creation plan. If one ignores God's creation plan, no one can lead a truly successful life.

According to God's creation plan, the temporary world before death is simply for the sake of an examination. According to this plan, living in an ideal world of ultimate joy is possible only in life after death. Given these fundamental realities, man should try to make himself successful in the examination before death so that in the stage of life that comes after death, he may obtain his desired ideal world—eternal Paradise—as a Divine reward. It is the only principle for a successful life.

WORLD OF 'TODAY', WORLD OF 'TOMORROW'

Every person nurses an ocean of desires in their heart. The place for fulfilling these desires is the world of 'tomorrow', not 'today'.

If a farmer wants to harvest a crop the day he plants the seeds, he will lose the seeds and be deprived of a harvest. The same is true of both the world of 'today' (this world) and the world of 'tomorrow' (the Hereafter). The world of 'today' is the place for engaging in action, while the world of 'tomorrow' is the place for receiving the results of one's actions. Therefore, if a person wants to obtain his 'reward' in this world, he will not be able to do the needed actions for a happy life in the world of 'tomorrow'. Thus, he will lose his only opportunity to build his next world. Few people realize this, however. In this world itself, they want to obtain things—such as complete fulfilment or ideal justice and peace—that can be had only in the next world. Because of this, they lose both. Wise is he who purchases the world of 'tomorrow' through the world of 'today'. He knows that if he gets stuck in the allurements and entanglements of the world of 'today', he will deprive himself of true success in the next world, the world of 'tomorrow'.

Suppose you are on a journey and want to enjoy all the comforts that a person can enjoy only at home during that time; you will naturally not be able to fulfil this desire. From this, one can understand the issue of the world of 'today' and the world of 'tomorrow'. This world is the place to journey in temporarily, and the next world is your eternal home. The world of 'today' is the path on the journey, and the world of 'tomorrow' is the final destination of this journey. God has made this world the place for engaging in action and the Hereafter for obtaining the results of our efforts.

If, while on a journey, you want to obtain the comforts you can enjoy only when you are at your destination, you are bound to deviate from your path. In the same way, if you desire that in the world of 'today' itself, you should obtain the results of your actions, which is possible only in the world of 'tomorrow', your planning will go haywire.

Wise is he who understands this difference between the world of 'today' and the world of 'tomorrow'. Therefore, he does not desire those things before death that one can find only in life after death.

It is imperative to recognize this fact. One must be realistic. Do not run after desires because desires will

not take you to any destination other than destruction. Every person nurses an ocean of desires; these desires in themselves are not wrong. However, the place for fulfilling these desires is the world of 'tomorrow', not the world of 'today'.

PLACE FOR ACTION, PLACE FOR RESULTS

Spirituality means building a divine personality in this world, so one can be truly successful in the world to come by obtaining a place in Paradise in the period of life after death.

This world is where an individual engages in actions, and the Hereafter is the place where he will receive the fruits of his actions. A concise and initial portion of a person's life is spent in this world. And then, he is taken to the next world, where, according to his actions, he will get a place either in Paradise or Hell.

In this scheme, the present world is a place for the test. An examination hall is always for tests, not for enjoying the results of a trial. A student who seeks to build an ideal world for himself in the examination

hall will fail to do so. The person who wants to make an eternal palace of joy in this world will not obtain his goal—because the present world has not been made for this purpose.

Wise is he who understands this difference and performs righteous actions in this world, hoping for God's blessings in the Hereafter.

In this matter, a wise person adopts the same principle as a wise student. When a student sits in an examination hall, he focuses all his attention on answering his test paper correctly. He does not attempt to build the palace of his dreams there.

Building a Divine Personality

This principle should govern man's relation to this world and the Hereafter. Every person must spend a brief life before their death preparing for the Hereafter to obtain a world of eternal joy in the period of life after death. When a person who is heedless in this matter enters the next world, he will find that this heedlessness cannot be compensated for. Also, he will not be able to return to the present world and be given a chance to live again.

Spirituality is about training oneself for the world that will come after death. Spirituality is about building

a divine personality. Through spirituality, a person makes himself so capable that he can genuinely succeed in the world that comes after death. Spirituality is the crux or gist of religion. Spirituality is the training ground where people develop a divine personality, so they are made capable of obtaining a place in Paradise in the period of life after death.

Spiritual Progress

What is spiritual progress? Spiritual progress is another name for bringing about divine awakening in one's inner personality. For example, physical food makes a man's physical body healthy. Similarly, through spiritual 'food', in the form of specific sublime experiences, called *Rizq-e-rab* in the Quran, man's spiritual being is made healthy.

It was the 16th of July 2004. There was a power cut, and the ceiling fan had stopped. So I was sitting in my room in the severe heat. I stayed in that condition for a long time, till finally the electricity resumed and the fan started moving.

This was a moment of sudden experience for me. The fan began to move, and my body felt cool. I felt as if suddenly an age of trouble had ended, and another period, one of comfort, had arrived. At that

time, I remembered the *hadith* reports of the Prophet in which it is said that the world is like a prison for the believer. When a believer's death comes, he will suddenly find himself in the gardens of Paradise. The trouble-filled stage of life in this world will suddenly get over, and the age of comfortable life will begin at that moment.

The divine feelings hidden in my nature arose when the above incident happened. A material occurrence got converted into a spiritual experience. My heart prayed that God might bless me in just the same way. When I depart from the world, may it be like moving from a period of trouble and entering a period of comfort and peace!

Spirituality is an intellectual journey that lifts man from a material world and transports him to a world of meaningfulness. This journey happens at the inner level. Other people do not visibly see this journey happening, but the spiritual traveller himself experiences it with great depth.

Spirituality makes a person an actual human being. If a person's life is bereft of spirituality, there is no difference between him and a beast.

LIFE OF PARADISE

Paradise is where all pleasures will be given to man in greater quantity and a complete form and where man's limitations about the capacity to enjoy those pleasures will be done away with. As a result, Paradise will become a place of eternal joy for man.

Some years ago, I met a person. I told him that the present world is a temporary place, while the Hereafter is man's eternal abode. Therefore, a man should build his 'paradise' in the eternal world. That person remarked that man gets bored after some time with a thing that gives him comfort or pleasure. Thus, there is a significant boredom problem in the 'developed' world. In such a situation, what is the use of eternal Paradise?

Those who do not believe in the Hereafter often talk like this. However, such talk is based on a misunderstanding. The truth is that boredom happens because of the cessation of the capacity to enjoy rather than the desire to enjoy.

People who argue against the existence of the Hereafter using the above argument assume that after enjoying something, they get bored of that, which is why the thing no longer remains a pleasure for them.

However, this suggestion is wrong. The reality is that man has an insatiable nature. Therefore, he wants to enjoy the things that he likes forever.

However, man is a victim of innumerable limitations in the present world. Thus, whenever a man wants to enjoy something he likes, his limitations become a hurdle in his path after a short time. Therefore, despite their desire, he loses the strength to derive joy from these things. For example, eating a dish we like does not get over its good taste. However, soon our stomachs become full, so we are compelled to stop eating. Similarly, people often stop eating many things despite desiring them because they fear they will become obese and fall prey to various diseases.

The same is the case with all other objects of pleasure. Boredom or lack of interest limits our capacity to enjoy rather than limit our desires.

Paradise is where not only will all pleasures be given to man in greater quantity and a complete form, but also where his limitations about the capacity to enjoy those pleasures will be done away with. In Paradise, it will no longer be that man wants to enjoy something, but he cannot do so because of his limitations. As a result, Paradise will become a place of eternal joy for man.

The boredom that man experiences in the world results from a contradiction. Man is an idealist by birth. He wants to obtain things in their ideal form. However, in this world, everything is non-ideal. It is the actual cause of boredom with things.

A man runs after something or the other in line with his desires. He thinks that this is the very thing that he has been seeking. However, after obtaining and experiencing it, he feels the same thing is much below his desirable ideal. It is why a man experiences the joy of searching for something in this world, but after obtaining that, he experiences no lasting pleasure.

There is a deceptive joy for man in the present world. There will be true joy in the Hereafter, but only for those who have proven eligible for it. Everything in the Paradise of the Hereafter will be ideal. The inhabitants of Paradise will experience true and unlimited joy. In Paradise, they will get whatever they want, and more will be added. There will be no question of boredom in that perfect world.

ON THE THRESHOLD OF PARADISE

According to the evolutionary law, the earth is heading towards a superior stage. This will be the earth's last evolutionary stage, which we can call the perfect world—Paradise.

What is Paradise? There is no mystery about Paradise. It is an accepted scientific fact, just like any other scientific fact. In reality, Paradise is a transformation of the earth. The earth was initially an inchoate, molten mass; then, it cooled down to its present state, taking the form of our world as we know it today. Similarly, another transformation will take place in the future, but to a far greater degree: at that time, our non-paradisiacal earth will turn into Paradise.

In this world, many things are brought into existence due to conversion—for example, water results from converting two gases. A tree represents the conversion of the soil's nutrients. Machines are a conversion of iron from its crude state into complex mechanisms. The industrial world ensures the conversion of inert materials into socially valuable commodities.

In the same way, the conversion will take place on a far grander scale in the future. This, far from the ideal world, will change into a perfect world at that time. It, in terms of religion, would be known as Paradise. This instance of conversion is referred to in the Quran in the following verse: “When the earth shall be changed into another earth...” (14:48)

This process of conversion has repeatedly taken place on earth. On our planet, conversion is a known and natural process. That is, it is a regular occurrence. Believing in Paradise is like believing in the continuance of a predictable series of events. It is just like saying a factory that has produced 999 items, and now the thousandth item is about to be produced.

Paradise is not just a matter of religious belief or dogma. According to the eternal laws of nature, Paradise is a state bound to come into existence. A study of the law governing earthly systems shows that the present world is undergoing a continuous evolutionary process, of which Paradise, logically, is the ultimate phase. Paradise is the natural culmination of creation with a definite beginning at a particular time.

Astronomical studies show that the Universe is so vast and expanding at such a rate that its total dimensions are yet to be estimated, even with the use of very powerful

telescopes. In this immeasurably vast universe, the earth is a highly tiny planet. Our world is smaller than a grain of sand compared to this universe.

Our earth is a rare exception throughout the entire universe because it is the only place where extraordinary things like water, greenery, air and oxygen are present. If life can prevail on this earth, it is because, side by side with it, there are life support systems. On the earth, all those valuable elements exist by utilizing which man can, if he wills, build a civilization. It is the task of human beings to convert this potential into reality.

It is evident that civilization, passing continuously from one stage of its history to another, is moving from its initial stage of development to a higher plateau altogether. (For details, see the United Nations publication: “*The History of Mankind*”)

The Journey of Civilization

This journey of human civilization has been mentioned in the Quran regarding the changes that occur on earth every day in the alternation of day and night. Similarly, a much bigger event shall take place on earth. As the Quran puts it: “You will progress from stage to stage.” (84:19)

The evolution of history makes it clear that human civilization is continuously advancing along the path of progress and development. The final model of this progress and development will be called “spiritual civilization”, or Paradise.

The history of civilization shows that it has passed through three major phases, and now all the indications are that it is in the fourth and final stage of its journey. The three significant civilisation phases are as follows: 1. The Stone Age; 2. The Agricultural Age; 3. The Industrial Age.

It is a matter of common knowledge that these three phases of civilization have already taken place. However, Alvin Toffler, author of the bestseller, *Future Shock*, says that the fourth phase, probably the last period of civilization, will occur in the future. This author calls this fourth phase the Super-Industrial Age, which will be less materialistic than the previous stages. Therefore, equating this fourth phase with spiritual civilization would be more appropriate.

Let us take the first period of civilization. It was a time when man could only use whatever material was present in its original form on the earth. The stone was the most readily available and useful of all the materials. Although many other things existed on the

planet apart from stone, like wood and animals, and even a simple form of agriculture, stone took pride in place as the most widely used; this phase came to be called the Stone Age. So far as early homo sapiens were concerned, he possessed the same natural qualities as the people of the present day. For example, the latest research has shown that the human brain contained one hundred billion particles during the Stone Age, no less than what is contained in the human brain today. It was only because of a lack of education and knowledge that man could not utilize his hidden potential at that time.

Then came the dawn of the agricultural period, during which man discovered more and more ways of harnessing nature. This period saw the development of irrigation, ploughing, the rearing and breeding of animals, and iron and carts with wheels. This way, leading a better life than the previous age was possible.

The industrial period began at the point when man moved ahead from animal power and invented mechanical power. Now man converted water into steam power and made steam engines. There was a further leap forward when petrol was discovered and used for propulsion. Similarly, modern methods of

communication were developed, which converted the whole world into a global village.

In the Industrial Age, by using mechanical power, a man engaged in new enterprises such as the production of fast-moving vehicles, the rapid communication of news, the setting up of paper mills and the building of cities along modern lines.

In this way, a whole new world, beautiful and meaningful, came into existence, with a fresh viewpoint on education and learning, called industrial civilization.

Alvin Toffler called the Super-industrial Age the fourth phase of civilization. In his view, the most distinctive aspect of this age will be complete automation, i.e., the use of electronics will be on such a large scale that most jobs will be performed with the absolute minimum human control or intervention. In a normal situation, a man would, ideally, be able to fulfil all his requirements single-handedly.

The advent of automation is an advance intimation of the joys of Paradise. Indeed, of Paradise, the Quran says: "We are your companions in this life and the Hereafter. Therein you shall have all that your souls desire, and therein you shall have all you ask for as

a rich provision from One who is ever forgiving and most merciful.’ (41:31)

From the scientific and academic standpoint, the facts mentioned above make the ideal age of the future—the “spiritual civilization”—understandable in terms of being a super-industrial age.

This fourth phase of civilization is yet to be completed, but in this phase, that ideal world—in religious terms, Paradise—will most probably take shape in the world Hereafter.

Paradise: Final Phase of Man’s Journey

Paradise is the final period of the journey of civilization. By the law of nature, such a world will exist in due course. All limitations and disadvantages will end: there will be no fear or grief, nor will there be any noise or pain. All those potentialities which have been apparent to a man from the very first day will be fulfilled in the world of Paradise.

Moreover, the human personality will also attain new heights of development. It will be the culmination point for man: he will become the perfect man. He will find an eternal life in which old age, accidents, disease, and death are absent. This will be the ideal world where a man can utilize the full potential of his

personality, thus experiencing complete fulfilment.

Paradise will be the culminating point of the evolutionary process of human civilization. Paradise will be the dawning of the perfect and ideal world man has always dreamt of. On reaching Paradise, man will be eternally free from all sorrows and hardships. Paradise will be the perfect realm of joy, peace, and eternal happiness.

It should be borne in mind that Paradise is not a place of stagnation. In Paradise, man will make discoveries, and this series of findings will be unending. For this reason, there will be no boredom in Paradise because boredom prevails only where discoveries do not occur. To man, fresh experience is the most significant source of happiness, and in Paradise, the doors of eternal truth will continue to open every day. Therefore, the pure bliss of Paradise will not be fleeting but genuinely eternal.

The making of Paradise is just as possible as the making of the earth and the development of different civilizations. In the ancient Stone Age, a developed agricultural period lay hidden, which emerged later. Similarly, the far more developed industrial period was hidden in the agricultural period and appeared at the proper time. We can say that there lies hidden in

this industrial period, a far more developed, refined, and spiritual period, which will appear in time for all to see. In practical terms, the emergence of this spiritual or heavenly period is as possible as that of previous periods of history.

In the industrial period, the earth has once again been beautified. Its construction has been meticulously planned. Developments in science and technology have made the world a far better place to live in. Similarly, with the dawn of the final period, the spiritual age, the earth will improve, becoming an ideal world. There are several verses in the Quran that give clear indications of this. For instance, verse three of the 84th chapter of the Quran speaks of the earth expanding, while another verse (39:74) says: "Praise be to God who has fulfilled His promise to us and made us the inheritors of this land, letting us settle in the Garden wherever we want." Furthermore, verse 21 of the 57th chapter of the Quran describes Paradise as "...vast as heaven and earth, which has been made ready for those who believe in God and His messengers."

According to the Islamic tradition, the earth was in charge of the Jinns in its beginning. Then it was handed over to human beings. Later, a period will

ensue when the earth will be entirely under the domination of the Angels. At that time, tremendous changes will be made to the planet, an ideal and perfect world in the most total sense of expression. This evolutionary period of the earth has been referred to this in the Quran:

“The earth will shine with the light of its Lord.” (39:69)

Today our world is potentially a Paradise. Tomorrow this potential will become a reality, and then the earth will become a place of eternal happiness and joy.

Events have shown that the present state of the earth is not ideal, even though nature’s life support system exists in its perfect form on the planet earth. This system may be at its best on the planet, but there is one thing in all this that is far from ideal. Here, good and bad people exist alongside each other. The presence of seriously flawed individuals everywhere is the source of evil. However, when the final phase of civilization approaches, all the wrong people will be separated from the good. The bad people will be deprived of all the earth’s resources, and the earth will be entrusted solely to the good people. It is the truth that has been mentioned in the following verse: “And indeed We have written in Az-Zabur, (Psalms) that My righteous slaves shall inherit the land” (i.e.

the land of Paradise). (21:105) This statement made in the Quran is recorded in detail in the Book of Psalms in the Bible: “The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell in it forever.” (*Psalms*, 37:29)

Studies show that our earth is a rare exception in this vast universe. In the vastness of space, there are massive stars in such multitudes that outnumber the grains of sand on the seashore. However, many of these stars are only balls of fire. It is a known fact that these stars have remained in the same condition for the last thirteen billion years. Only our earth is constantly changing and renewing itself in this stagnant universe. Exceptionally, an evolutionary process is at work, for the earth continues to witness one stage after another. Ten billion years ago, the earth was just a fireball. However, then it cooled down to become a temperate planet. Subsequently, a phase of heavy rains led to vegetation growth. Then came the animals. Lastly, the humans appeared. After the appearance of human beings, the process of civilization set in on the earth. In the first phase, man could only build a primitive world. However, he became increasingly successful at constructing a highly developed world later. This human success goes hand in hand with a continuous evolutionary process. Moreover, it is natural to believe

that one more stage is in the offing—that of a perfect world—eternal Paradise in the Hereafter.

Paradise is not something mysterious: it is the final stage of the known evolutionary process. So far as animals are concerned, organic evolution is a baseless assumption. However, the periodic evolution of the non-living world is generally accepted. According to this natural law, the advent of Paradise is entirely understandable. Studies show that our earth was a ball of fire approximately ten billion years ago before it became the fantastic planet we live on today. Then, when man first came to inhabit the earth, there was a period of what we would now call under-development. After this came another evolutionary phase in the wake of the industrial revolution—a development period.

According to the evolutionary law, the earth is heading towards a superior stage. This will be the last evolutionary stage of the planet, which we call the perfect world. In this ideal world, all types of limitations will end. By Divine arrangement, justice will prevail in its most perfect form. The wicked will be removed from the earth, and only the virtuous will enter this ideal world, where there will be no pollution. Calamities will cease, and all disadvantages

such as disease, accidents, old age and death will be eradicated forever.

All tasks are performed by hard work in the present world: hardship and success are inseparable. Such a state of affairs will no longer prevail in Paradise, for such refined changes will occur that each activity will be enjoyable. As it is said in the Quran: “The people of Paradise shall be happily occupied on that Day.” (36:55)

In Paradise, there will be no need for special arrangements for human diversion, for all activities will be a source of entertainment and enjoyment.

In response to his natural urges, the world that man has been searching for for thousands of years will find in a state of perfection. He will find a life of joy, peace, and happiness forever in this world. There will be no necessity for physical labour; pleasant intellectual activities will suffice to achieve all desired goals. Paradise is the final phase of the journey of human civilization. Today we stand on the threshold of Paradise. In the world, Hereafter, Paradise will be a reality.

DISCOVERY OF PARADISE

The present world is for engaging in actions that can make a person eligible for Paradise: It is not the place for building a 'paradise'. The right place for Paradise is in the Hereafter.

It was probably in 1983. There was an Englishman living in Delhi. He had read my books and had become quite familiar with my thinking. Once, I mentioned to him that I was fond of pens. I said I had used many pens but had not found a pen I liked. He said he would soon go to London and fetch me a nice pen.

After some time, the gentleman met me and gave me a fountain pen. He mentioned that he had bought the pen in a market in Oxford after quite a search. He said that he knew I was a perfectionist and because in the world, no pen is a perfect pen, I would not like any pen!

The truth is that by birth, every person is a perfectionist. Therefore, it is right to say that man is a perfection-seeking being. It is this feature of human nature because almost every person is drowned in frustration, so much so that even those who have obtained all the things of the world are not exempt from this feeling.

Therefore, man is, by nature, a perfectionist, but nothing is perfect in his world. In this way, there is a contradiction between man's desires and the things of the world. This incompatibility between the two is the real reason for man's frustration.

Man makes every effort, seeking to fulfil his desires. Finally, the time may come when he obtains wealth, power, and everything he desires. However, he feels as frustrated as before, even after getting the things he had hankered with. Even then, he is not able to feel contented.

Before obtaining something he desires, man thinks it is that particular thing whose desire he nurses in his heart. However, after receiving it, he does not find the peace and satisfaction that one should have in obtaining something one desires. This is because his desire was for something perfect, while everything in this world is imperfect, and a perfectionist cannot find peace and satisfaction in something imperfect.

There is only one solution to this problem: that man should make the perfect world of Paradise his goal or target. In the most total sense, Paradise is an ideal world, while the present world is only an imperfect place compared to it. Paradise is the perfect world that man has been seeking since his birth. However,

because of their unawareness of Paradise, a man tries to fulfil his desires in this present world itself, and because of the incompatibility between his nature and the nature of this world, he becomes a victim of frustration.

The solution to this problem is just one—and it is that man should undergo a conscious inner revolution and obtain awareness of Paradise. After receiving this awareness, his feeling of frustration will end because he will come to know that the things he is searching for to satisfy his desires do not possess the ability to give him complete satisfaction and contentment. Following this discovery, his focus will be on Paradise of the Hereafter. After this, he will use the things of the world only at the level of his needs, not his desires. Moreover, when this transformation happens in a person, he will begin to live with a feeling of discovery and finding rather than deprivation and frustration.

The present world is more a place of losing than of gaining. Here, every person repeatedly feels that he has lost something or some opportunity, that someone has caused him loss or harm, that he has been wronged, and so on. A person cannot save himself from such situations. Every person faces them. Now,

the question is: What is the way to make up for these losses? There is only one way, and that is firm and sure faith in Paradise. After facing every harm and loss in this world, the person who has such faith in God's Paradise will be able to say that worldly damage is very petty compared to the priceless Paradise. After every material loss, an individual will lean towards God more. He will become even more desirous of eternal Paradise.

The Quran mentions that the inhabitants of Paradise will 'have no fear, nor will they grieve' (2:38). It means that no one is bereft of fear and grief in the present world. The present world's system has been made so that attaining a life free of anxiety and grief is impossible. Given this, the only proper attitude for man is that he should not make this world his goal. He should give the world only the status of a road that leads to his true destination—Paradise.

This fact is expressed in a *Hadith* in the following words: "O God! There is no comfort, but the comfort of the Hereafter." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2961) To search for comfort and happiness in the present world is like a passenger trying to construct a mansion on a railway platform. An individual stays on a railway

platform for only a brief period, so it is not the right place to build a mansion where he can live for a long time. The present world is a place for engaging in actions that can make a person eligible for Paradise: It is not the place for building a ‘paradise’. The right place for Paradise is in the Hereafter.

To set Paradise as one’s goal is not just a matter of religious belief. Instead, it is the very purpose of human life.

ACCOUNTABILITY TO GOD

Accountability instils the fact in people’s minds that their freedom is not absolute and that God will take account of everyone’s words and deeds on the Day of Judgement.

In the present age, the most significant industry is the ‘loophole industry’—finding ways to evade rules and laws. No matter how comprehensive it may be, any law is, after all, expressed in human language, which undoubtedly is a limited means of expression. It cannot encompass all aspects in an unlimited way. It is why loopholes exist or can be found in all the laws made in human language.

Some people can manage to find loopholes in almost every law. For example, a trader acts against a tax law. As a result, he does not pay as much tax as he legally should. The tax authorities, citing a clause in the tax laws, institute a case against him. The trader then employs a legal expert in exchange for a considerable fee. This legal expert studies the tax laws and discovers a legal point in which he finds that the particular tax law cannot apply to the trader.

This issue is not just of one trader and one legal expert. Instead, it is almost every person's case. People are often on the lookout to find a way to escape from some responsibility, thinking that others will not be able to do anything against them for this evasion or will not notice their dereliction of duty. It removes the aspect of fear from their life, although it is not possible for a person to lead a disciplined life without an element of fear.

Belief in God is the only solution to this problem. It entails believing in a Being that is bigger than all human beings and has ultimate control over every individual. He knows everything, and everyone is answerable to Him. He can punish everyone for their sins; no one is out of His grasp. In this way, belief in God introduces in man a particular aspect of fear, the presence of which is essential for human life.

God knows all things. He knows all the things that people reveal and all they conceal. He knows the condition of every heart. He knows what we think and how we feel. Wherever we may be, we are in God's sight. In no condition are we out of His reach.

Accountability comes from this concept of God. This belief instils the fact in people's minds that their freedom is not absolute and that God will take account of everyone's words and deeds on the Day of Judgement. God is continuously watching every person. God watches all of us constantly.

It is this understanding that makes a person God-fearing. When an aggregate of such people come together, they form a righteous society. Conversely, a society with no concept of accountability to God will fall prey to total anarchy.

Belief in God is necessary for the proper conduct of human life. Man repeatedly falls prey to temptations that cause him to give in to injustice and oppression. On such occasions, only a living belief in God's omniscience can act as a firm check on that tendency. It is only belief in God that can genuinely discipline him.

The necessity of belief in God for an individual and society is definite proof of God's existence. The fact that the proper conduct of human life is not possible

without belief in God itself proves that God does indeed exist and that each person is accountable to Him.

Belief in God gives man certainty. It disciplines his life. It gives him the confidence and assurance that if he abstains from evil in his daily life and follows the path of virtue, he will simultaneously obtain benefits. First, he will be saved from God's chastisement. Second, he will earn an eternal reward for righteous living in eternal Paradise from God.

The belief in accountability to God is a belief in human progress. It acts as a powerful incentive for the perfection of humanity. This belief puts human life on the path of truth so that it will never stop until the journey ends.

ELIGIBILITY FOR PARADISE

Paradise is for one who attains the realization of His Creator at the level of *maarifah* while God is unseen and bows down before God while possessing the freedom to disobey Him.

Paradise is a blessing without limits. One will find it only by paying a high price which should be without limitations. Very few fortunate people will

be declared eligible for being settled in the world of Paradise.

The first test for admission into Paradise is that man attains the realization of His Creator at the level of *maarifah*. He should discover the Truth amidst a jungle of thoughts, views, beliefs, and ideologies. He should develop the insight to see those not visible to the physical eye. He should feel those things that cannot be supposed at the physical level. Passing by the tumult of the external world, he should become a traveller of the inner world.

Likewise, a condition for admission to Paradise is that man bows down before God while retaining the freedom to disobey. Ignoring all incentives of becoming self-centred, he becomes God-centred in the complete sense. He becomes genuinely devoted to God and God alone. Turning his face from innumerable centres of glitter and attraction, he devotes his full attention to God.

Admission to Paradise will be possible only for the person who, amid adverse conditions, always remains established in positive thinking. This person overcomes jealousy, pride, revenge, and other negative feelings. He unilaterally becomes an epitome of compassion

and seeks the well-being of others. Even though he can resort to oppression and injustice, he never does so. In every condition and circumstance, he makes himself bound by justice.

Paradise is a beautiful divine colony. Therefore, only those souls who had subjected themselves to the process of purification in the present world will be admitted.

The present world is a world of tests. Here, every person becomes polluted in some way or the other. So now, the task that every person should engage in is a continuous process of self-purification till his polluted personality becomes pure and he becomes a purified personality.

A person of Paradise lives as a flower amidst thorns, which can become a tower of light amidst the darkness, who can obtain the secret of peace amidst earthquakes and storms, who gives proof of love amidst hatred, who, despite people's oppression, unilaterally forgives them, who experiences gain even in loss.

A person of Paradise is he who has become close to God, who sees the light of God in the rays of the sun, who experiences the divine touch in the gushing of the wind, who obtains an introduction to God's greatness in the heights of the mountains, who witnesses God's

mercy in the flow of the rivers, who in the mirror of creation begins to see the glowing radiance of the Creator.

God has, through His prophets, explained the attributes of a person fit for Paradise. Therefore, while living in this world, a person who produces in himself paradisiacal attributes will, after death, be declared eligible for entry into Paradise.

Entry into Paradise will happen neither on any recommendation nor based on a connection to any revered personality. Neither will it happen based on any mysterious spiritual solutions. Instead, admission into Paradise is entirely based on a known reality—and that is, that the person who in the present world becomes and lives like a paradisiacal person will find admission in Paradise in the Hereafter.

Paradise is for those who have purified themselves. Purification means that man should abandon a life of heedlessness and adopt a life of awareness. He should be strong enough to overcome desires which come in the way of achieving this goal. He should save himself from the things that can deviate him from Truth. If a matter of expediency comes before him, he should ignore it. If feelings of pride or resentment arise, he should bury them inside himself.

CONCLUSION

Man has sought a Paradise on earth for thousands of years due to his natural urges. With the coming of the industrial revolution and the age of consumerism, the man thought that he could build a Paradise on earth, that the industrial age would culminate into the perfect world—Paradise—that he longed for. However, the hopes that man could make a Paradise on Earth were dashed to pieces with the coming of pollution, acid rain and global warming. Moreover, now the Covid-19 pandemic has made man realize to the last extent that he cannot build a Paradise on earth.

Paradise will only be found in a state of perfection hereafter. In Paradise, man will find a life of joy, peace, and happiness forever. There will be no necessity for physical labour; pleasant intellectual activities will suffice to achieve all the desired goals. Man must realize that he stands on the threshold of Paradise. The present earth is a Paradise-in-the-making, not Paradise. How can man achieve the Paradise of his dreams?

To find an answer to this question, one must become aware of the Creation Plan of God. God—the Creator

CONCLUSION

of man, has created man according to His Plan. To become acquainted with this Plan, a man must thoroughly understand himself. Just as the workings of a machine can only be understood when we study the engineer's drawings who made it. Besides the engineer's mind, there is no other thing that can clarify what the machine is meant for. The case of man is the same. Only by understanding the Creation Plan of the Creator can we know the purpose of man's life. Man's existence is such a unique phenomenon that no other such example can be found throughout the vastness of the cosmos. Man is rightly called the 'best of all creations,' which means the best and most meaningful 'being' among all the things created. Such a 'meaningful being' cannot have been created without a purpose. The Creator of man has created him according to a special Plan. The Quran, the only preserved religious scripture, sheds light on this Plan. The Quran states:

“He created death and life so that He might test you, and find out which of you is best in conduct.” (67:2)

According to this verse of the Quran, the man was created as an eternal being, and 'death and life' represent both the pre-death and post-death periods of human life. So, death and life cover the entire eternal

lifespan of human beings. The Creator of man has created him according to a unique plan. His intention is that man must spend a period of trial in this present, imperfect world, and after this, according to his deeds, he will earn the right to inhabit the perfect and eternal world, another name for which is Paradise.

According to His will, God created a perfect world called Paradise: a world as per all of our desires as human beings, in that it is free of all limitations and disadvantages, free of fear and pain, and free of all imperfections. It would be an eternal world with neither death nor old age, an ideal world where we could achieve fulfilment.

Less-than-perfect beings cannot inhabit a perfect Paradise. So, God created perfection-seeking beings—human beings. He intended us to spend a period of trial here on earth. After this, we will earn the right to inhabit the perfect and eternal world according to our deeds.

The essence of God's Creation Plan is to give a person complete freedom—not simply as a gift, but as a test. This test would enable God to judge who misused his freedom and who put his freedom to the best use. This is the divine scheme of things for man. In the pre-death period of life, an individual has the chance

to qualify himself for Paradise so that in the post-death period of life, he may be settled as a deserving candidate in this perfect world.

This world, therefore, has all the components necessary for a test. It has perfection-seeking beings in a less-than-perfect world, beings who have been given complete freedom to choose their actions. Thus, we have a choice—we can misuse our freedom to do evil or use our freedom wisely, submit to God, and qualify for Paradise. Those who misuse their God-given freedom are chastised thus in the Quran:

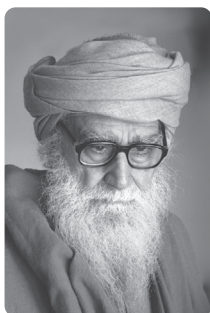
“This is the truth from your Lord. Let him who will believe in it and who will deny it.’ For the wrongdoers, we have prepared a Fire that will cover them like a canopy, and if they beg for water, they will be given water as hot as molten lead, which will scald their faces: how dreadful a drink, and how evil a resting place!” (18:29)

The Creator of the world has created this world as one half of a pair—the present world, in which we pass our lives after birth, is the first half; and the next eternal world, where we live after death, is the other half. The Creator of man has further created him as an eternal creature and has divided his life into the pre-death period, the life in this world, the post-death

period, or the life after death. The limited period before death is meant to be a test for man, while the eternal period after his death will be the period for his reward or punishment, based on his performance in the test in this life.

According to this Creation Plan of God, human beings are placed in situations where they have to face hardships from time to time throughout their lives as part of their test. Difficulty and sadness are an integral part of the creation plan of the Creator. No man has the power to extricate himself from this life of trial and tribulation. This arrangement reminds man that the present world has not been made as a place of luxury and comfort but as a period of trial and will help determine whether he is eligible for eternal life in Paradise. It is the scheme of existence for this world devised by its Creator. Creation aims to select those who are fit to inhabit the world of Paradise.

Paradise is the destination of man. Man is in search of Paradise, the ideal world where one can find perfect peace and satisfaction, where life will be truly meaningful. According to the creation plan, God will settle those people in Paradise in the Hereafter, who in this world qualify themselves according to the Divine standards. These are the ones who, using their intellectual capacities, discover and devote themselves to God. Despite possessing freedom, they willingly regulate themselves to Divine discipline. Coming out of intellectual confusion, they discover the Truth and develop a Paradisiacal personality within themselves. In Paradise, such people will find a life of joy, peace, and happiness forever.



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