



GOD AND THE LIFE HEREAFTER



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CONCEPT OF TOMORROW

Man's life has two stages—the temporary pre-death and the eternal post-death periods. Death is to move from temporary life to eternal life. This division is so that whatever man could not obtain 'today' in the present world, he may be able to obtain 'tomorrow', in the world of the Hereafter.

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 is 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 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 be understood only when this fact is taken into consideration. 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 like a bridge between the two phases of man's life. 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, man prepares himself for the Hereafter during his temporary stay. Then, after death, he goes to the next, eternal world. If he is eligible for Paradise, there 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. 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. Only such a man can be called a truly successful man.

PARADISE: MAN’S DESTINATION

Those who develop themselves according to the divine standards in the present world 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 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 that a known man was moving towards an unknown destination. This was why he did not know 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 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. 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, different types of challenging conditions act as a barrier to making this world joyful. Man seeks an ideal world but is fated to live in a non-ideal world. By birth, man

is a perfectionist. He seeks a perfect world. However, after all the efforts, he finds that achieving an ideal world is simply impossible here.

The fact is that, unlike what Dr Carrel suggests, the unknown 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 man can live with complete fulfilment forever.

The insoluble problem of man's reality becomes solved when we study 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 in creating him. This is the proper method and approach to this matter. When the issue is seen in this way, one discovers that the confusion or lack of clarity about man was only because people tried to understand man without considering God's creation plan.

A machine is a created thing, not its own maker. Similarly, man is a creature, not the Creator. Therefore, knowing the Creator's creation plan is necessary to understand

man's reality. Without understanding the engineer's plan, one cannot explain the machine. Similarly, explaining man without knowing the Creator's plan for him 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.

The Maker of this world has made a pair to this world. One member of this pair is the world where we live after birth—the planet earth. The other pair is the world where we go after death. These two worlds form a pair. In this way, man's life has two parts: the pre-death and post-death periods. 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 reward or punishment. Because the present world is designed for the purpose of test, 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 absent. If a student wants to build an ideal world in the examination hall, he will surely face only despair and frustration. Similarly, those who seek to build a perfect world in this limited and temporary world of test will face sorrow and disappointment.

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

For life after death, God has made a perfect world, Paradise. This Paradise is, in every sense, an ideal world. God will lodge such people as prove themselves to be 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 those people who will qualify for

Paradise? These are the ones who, using their intellectual capacities, attain the realization of God. Coming out of intellectual confusion, they discover the truth. They devote themselves to God alone and worship none but Him. Despite possessing freedom, they let themselves willingly be regulated by divine discipline. Faced with adverse conditions, they build in themselves a positive personality. They deal with others in the same ethical way they want others to deal with them.

All these qualities are the criteria set according to God's creation plan for an individual to be eligible for being settled in eternal Paradise after death. Those who fail to meet this standard will face eternal deprivation and frustration.

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 in this world in the wrong way, will live in eternal frustration and failure in the Hereafter.

PROOF OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

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 points made in the book is that a solar eclipse would occur on the 11th of August 1999 that 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 years. 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 live and 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 own existence. Every person accepts his 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, therefore 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.

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 this.

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, the evidence of the blessings of God is often not visible in people's lives.

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

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 how he found the answer to his questions. 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 the concept of God had been changed in all of these religions, as their original text was not preserved.

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 is Islam alone. Therefore, one who seriously wants to know the right concept of God has 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 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. Throughout human history, God has guided 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 providing him 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, it was made possible to fully preserve the Quran 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.

GOD AND THE HEREAFTER

The consciousness of God is deeply embedded in human nature. What is needed is to remove the veil that has been placed over human nature. When this veil is removed, 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 existence of the universe. Hence, we cannot deny the existence of God.

The world's meaningfulness 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 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, rather than at the level of observation. 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 obtain supportive evidence or probability, another name for which is certainty in scientific terms.

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, particular desires exist. 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 billionaire 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, loss, illness, 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 part of a pair. This world and the world Hereafter form a pair. After accepting this other world in the Hereafter, man's existence becomes complete. The significance and meaningfulness of everything can now be seen. Everything now falls into place.

The 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 performed 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 personality. 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 the 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.

Satisfactory Explanation

When we accept the existence of the world of the Hereafter, we reach a satisfactory understanding of life. 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 without receiving any 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 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 only be fulfilled 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 people who in the present world prove themselves to be evil will be eternally deprived of all the good things.

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 only man who lives in contradiction. Other than man, the whole of the universe is a zero-defect universe. It is only man whose life seems 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 that are there for the rest of the creation are fully available for man too, with the only difference that the rest of the universe gets what it desires in the world of 'today', while man will get all that he wishes in the world of '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. 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 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 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. The consciousness of God is deeply embedded in human nature. What is needed is to remove the veil that has been placed over human nature. When this veil is removed, man will begin to 'see' God with even more certainty than when man sees the sun with his eyes open.

TWO WORLDS

Man's greatest omission is to remain engrossed with the ephemeral world. But the day he leaves for the next world, and his veil is removed, he will regret his negligence.

Sir Arthur Eddington, a well-known scientist, writes in his book, *The Nature of the Physical World*: “I have drawn up my chairs to my two tables. There are duplicates of every object. One of these tables is comparatively permanent. It is substantial. Table no 2 is my scientific table. My scientific table is mostly empty. Sparsely scattered in that emptiness are numerous electric charges rushing about with great speed.”

This description could be applied equally to the entire universe. However, it is especially true of our world, which has two aspects: appearance and reality.

What we see around us, we call the world. But there is also the other invisible world of the Hereafter. So when death comes, it means leaving the visible or apparent

world to enter into the invisible, concealed, but the real world of the Hereafter.

While our present world is visible to everyone, the next world lies behind a veil and is unobservable. That is why man makes the mistake of regarding only the present world as accurate and the other world as imaginary. Therefore, even those who believe in the Hereafter consider it an abstract concept irrelevant to their current life. That is why they do not allow it to influence their material existence despite believing in it as an article of faith.

This is man's greatest omission. Engrossed with this ephemeral world, he fails to realize that the day he leaves for the next eternal world, it will be as if a veil has been removed. And on that day, he will regret his negligence. But regret will serve no useful purpose. He will have lost his 'tomorrow' for his 'today'.

Just as the true scientist can see 'two tables', the faithful servant of God can discover the 'two worlds.' And it is he and he alone who, by the grace of God, will enter victoriously into the divine Paradise of the Almighty.

SEEK THE ETERNAL WORLD

Death reminds a person to rise beyond 'today' and think of 'tomorrow'—the eternal world after death. A truly successful person draws this lesson from death.

Turtles live up to 500 years. Some trees can remain standing for a thousand years. Mountains and rivers can retain their glory for millions of years. But human life is not more than 60-100 years. Man, who appears to be the noblest and superior of all creatures, lives a comparatively short life.

Stranger still is that this short human life is a continuous story of failure. An individual's life is so full of sorrow that the few moments of joy he experiences seem to be nothing more than an aberration or even a delusion. Sickness, accidents, and old age continuously shatter our dreams, and hopes. And in the end, after spending his days on Earth in sorrow, a person accepts defeat in the face of death.

A poor man is unhappy that he does not have a house

and enough money to meet his needs. But, on the other hand, the conditions of rich people are not significantly different. Having money creates even more significant problems for a rich man than a poor man with no money appears to face. A famous man, whom people constantly surround, is so troubled and miserable within that he cannot get a wink of sleep at night without consuming sleeping pills. In short, every person in this world is unhappy—each in different ways.

Even if you save yourself from unfavourable conditions and acquire joy and peace, how long will that state last? Even if you garner, by some means or the other, an enormous treasury of joys, it will keep you happy only for a few days, at the very most. And then the Angel of Death will suddenly come to take you, and all your wealth or the army you mustered to protect you will not be able to save you. Death overtakes everyone—rich and poor alike. It enters triumphantly into both the palace and hovel. Death is a person's greatest compulsion.

Death reminds a person to rise beyond 'today' and

think of ‘tomorrow’—the eternal world after death. It tells an individual to search for success on the other side of life—in the world to come. A truly successful person draws this lesson from death. If you remain deprived of this lesson, your joys, which you wallow in this world, will soon be snuffed out, and after death, you will find yourself in utter darkness.

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, the science of spirituality 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 not be able to understand the reality of light as he wrongly thought the source of light to be 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 has created two worlds. 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 both these ‘raw worlds’. He should actualize the potential for progress hidden inside the ‘raw worlds’ of both the material world and the conscious world of man’s inner existence.

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 inner being) is concerned, it is not progressing.

What can be called the progress of man’s consciousness or inner being? The Creator of man created him as

a conscious being but in a raw or natural state. The task that man has to perform while living in this world is to transform that 'raw' conscious existence into a highly developed conscious existence. The reality is that the same process is required in both the physical world and the world of consciousness. It is the process of conversion. It means converting a material world into a developed one. As far as the conscious existence of man is concerned, it means transforming one's raw personality into a truly developed personality.

By birth, man possesses what can be called a raw personality. A raw personality 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 personality 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 makes almost every person live 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 personality 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 personality 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, and so on.

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 conditioning. He should, once again, regain the natural state that he was born with.

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 a purified personality. 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 attain this spiritual goal through mystical practices, that these

practices could not produce a spiritual man. In fact, what is commonly thought of as spiritual 'attainment' from the mystical perspective is mere 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 feeling. Because of this, all of man's spiritual exercises became useless exercises. They could not become a means for the development of man's spiritual personality.

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 reach the stage 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 the norm. However, in the age of modern

science, it came to be known that man's heart is only a means of 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. It is because the source of intellectual or spiritual progress is the mind, 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 convert the negative items accumulated in his memory 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 negative experiences into positive items so that when they go out of the conscious mind and enter the unconscious mind or memory, they should be stored there as positive items. For example, suppose you have

formed a negative image of a person. In this matter, the spiritual process would be to remove the negative thoughts that you have built up regarding the person. If you had a negative image of the person, you must convert it into a positive image.

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 own 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 positive personality in the complete 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 one's 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 artificial veils that have fallen over his true nature. After removing these artificial curtains, what is left is called the 'spiritual personality' or positive 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 state 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 which man discovers at the level of his mind or consciousness.

The difference between consciousness and ecstasy is that the former is the name for a known intellectual condition, while the latter is the name of a vague state of the heart. To consider spirituality to be an ecstatic experience is to belittle spirituality. Higher spirituality is that which is a known experience at the level of the human mind. There is no such thing as the experience of ecstasy or heart-based spirituality. True spirituality

is obtained by activating one's consciousness, another name for this is mind-based spirituality. This journey takes place at the intellectual level within man. It helps to develop man into a completely positive personality by purifying one's mind of all negative items. It is such a personality that will be settled in eternal Paradise.

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 purification of the self (tazkiyah) in the Quran. Through such purification, an individual develops a spiritual and intellectual personality in this world. Only a person who has developed such

a spiritual personality in this world of test will 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.

Purification of the self is a continuous process that goes on day in and day out. According to a tradition, when a person does not allow this process of purification to continue within oneself the heart becomes covered with rust, just like iron when it comes in contact with water. A question was asked to the prophet as to the way to purify one's personality. 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. Therefore, a man ought to bury these negative feelings instantly, for if he fails to do so, they will become a permanent part of 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 removed from the mind, they gradually reach the unconscious part of the mind, from where it becomes difficult to eradicate them. Therefore, 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

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personalities. Such personalities are developed through mind-based spirituality, through reflection, and introspection. It is such purified personalities who will be deserving of entry into Paradise. Without this, one can never gain access to the eternal heavenly abode.

CONCLUSION

If you take this world to be your destination, you will finally arrive at frustration. But if you have made the Hereafter your destination, this belief will open the doors for eternal peace.

What is an individual's greatest longing? It is to lead a life full of happiness. This is the most incredible dream that people have dreamt of in every age. Every person lives with this dream. But everyone dies without this dream of his being fulfilled. All philosophies, ideologies, and human efforts revolve around this one thing. But till today, human beings have failed to realize this dream at the intellectual and the practical level.

There is just one cause for this failure. And that is, everyone wants their dreams fulfilled in this world. But

the experience of tens of thousands of years has proved a single point—that the present world is insufficient for this desire to be fulfilled. The limitations of the present world and the improper use of God-given human freedom are decisive barriers to the present world becoming a place where human dreams can be fulfilled.

We are still on the journey towards making our life successful when death overtakes us. We invent new machines, but new industrial problems emerge. We make great sacrifices and usher in new political systems, but the degeneration of those who come to occupy the seats of power, do not allow these new systems to function effectively. We want to craft a life of our dreams for ourselves, but other people's envy, jealousy, pride, oppression and revenge come to the fore, and we get entangled in all of this, so much so that we see the little nest that we had hoped we could find safety and shelter in crumbling before our eyes, and then we depart from this world.

All these continuous experiences prove that the world of our dreams cannot come into being in the present

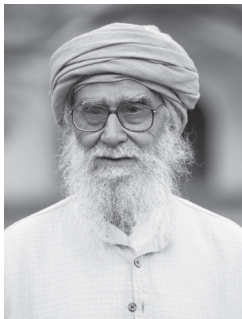
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world and under the present conditions. For this, another world, and other conditions, are needed. Our hopes and dreams are in themselves a real human quest. But the place where our longings will be fulfilled is the next world, the world after death, and not the present world, the world before death.

This understanding makes our life in this world meaningful. Once we are aware of this reality, this world becomes an arena for making efforts to determine our future in the eternal life after death. The next world is where we will face the results of our actions. Once we realise this, we know our destination, towards which we can move confidently, that is, the world Hereafter.

If you take this world to be your destination, you will finally arrive at nowhere but frustration, despondency and mental disturbance. But if you have made the Hereafter your destination, this belief will open the doors for eternal peace.

In a world where one incurs losses all too often, only such an understanding of life can be proper that conveys to us the secret of gaining through these losses.



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021) was an Islamic scholar, spiritual leader and peace activist. His work has received international recognition for his seminal contributions toward world peace. The Maulana authored over 200 books dealing with Islam's spiritual wisdom, the Prophet's non-violent approach, Islam's relation with modernity and other contemporary issues. His English translation of the Quran is widely appreciated as simple, clear and easily understandable. He founded Centre for Peace and Spirituality International in 2001 to popularize the culture of peace and share the spiritual message of Islam with people.

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GOD AND THE LIFE HEREAFTER

A meaningful creation is evidence of the Creator, that is, God. However, despite all its meaningfulness, man's world is defective in its present state. Man experiences that the world of his dreams cannot come into being in the present world and under the present conditions. For this, another world, and other conditions, are needed. We cannot fulfil our hopes and dreams in this world. The place where our desires will be fulfilled is the next world, the Hereafter, and not the present world. Once we are aware of this reality, this world becomes an arena for making efforts to determine our future in the eternal life after death. The next world is where we will face the results of our actions. This understanding makes our life in this world meaningful.

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