



# A SIMPLE INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM

Principles of Living a God-Oriented Life

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

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*Translated by:*  
Prof. Farida Khanam

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### **CPS International**

Centre for Peace and Spirituality International

1, Nizamuddin West Market, New Delhi-110013

e-mail: [info@cpsglobal.org](mailto:info@cpsglobal.org)

[www.cpsglobal.org](http://www.cpsglobal.org)

### **Goodword Books**

A-21, Sector 4, Noida-201301

Delhi NCR, India

e-mail: [info@goodwordbooks.com](mailto:info@goodwordbooks.com)

[www.goodwordbooks.com](http://www.goodwordbooks.com)

### **Center for Peace and Spirituality USA**

2665 Byberry Road, Bensalem, PA 19020

e-mail: [kkaleemuddin@gmail.com](mailto:kkaleemuddin@gmail.com)

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## FOREWORD

The literal meaning of Islam is submission, that is, submission to God's will. Submission, in fact, is the name of that natural response from a person to God, the response that is expressed by human beings after their realization of God. It is with this submission that that life has developed which is called a religious life.

What is realization of God? The realization of God is the realization of that Being who has created man, who has granted man with a personality which is unique throughout the vast universe, Who has created the planet earth for man and who has established a unique arrangement for man's survival which is called the life support system.

A person's quest does not stop here but rather becomes a part of his life in the form of a process

of discovery. Now, he discovers his relationship with God. He grasps the reality that he is not free but is under the command of God.

He realizes that the purpose of creating a human being in this world is to give him the opportunity to be the most superior of the creatures so that he may be credited with being one of those special beings who bound himself to living a principled life, in spite of having no compulsion to do so.

All things in this world are subjected to God. The stars and planets in space revolve in their orbits totally under the command of God. The trees, the rivers, the mountains— all these things strictly follow the plan laid down for them by God. On a parallel with this, the animals follow the pattern determined for them by their instincts. They are totally governed by their instincts. In this world human beings, as an exception, have been granted the blessings of freedom and power. This freedom offers two different paths to a person. One leads him to becoming arrogant and insolent, and leading an unrestricted life. This would mean his failing in his test paper.

On the other hand will be those who make right and proper use of their freedom. Although there is no

compulsion for them to adhere to divine principles, they will be successful in their test. They will be given rewards by God, such as no other creature can merit. They will be held to be those of God's servants, who have earned nearness to God. And they will live a life of comfort and happiness eternally in Paradise.

When man realizes that he is not free but has to act at God's behest and be accountable to Him, he starts living a God-Oriented life. Death for such a person is not the end of his life, but the beginning of an eternal life, where he will stand before God, so that God may declare His final decision about his eternal future.

This process of discovery continues until he realizes that the end of his life is going to culminate in the form of either eternal Paradise or eternal Hell. This quest makes him extremely serious about the course his life should take. Now he plans his life anew. Now he redefines everything. If at first all his activities were self-oriented, now they are God-oriented. It is this very lifestyle which is called Islam.

Wahiduddin Khan

March 16, 2021  
New Delhi, India



## TAWHEED

### Oneness of God

The concept of one God is the essence of Islam and the source of all of its teachings.

**G**od is one. God is an eternal, ever-living reality. He is all in all. Everything is from God. God is not from anything. God is the Creator of all things and He is managing the entire universe.

The Quran puts it thus: “God: there is no deity save Him, the Living, the Eternal One. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth. Who can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows all that is before them and all that is behind them. They can grasp only that part of His knowledge which He wills. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth; and their upholding does not weary Him. He is the Sublime, the Almighty one!” (2:255)

Then there is another chapter in the Quran which has this to say about God: “Say, ‘He is God, the One, God, the Self-sufficient One. He does not give birth, nor was He born, and there is nothing like Him.’” (112:1-4)

This short chapter of the Quran describes the oneness

of God. It not only states that God is only one but it also describes what it means to be the one God. This chapter has presented the concept of God in a pure and unadulterated form.

God is one and everyone is dependent upon Him. He is not dependent upon anyone, He himself, all alone, has power over everything. He does not beget nor is He begotten. He is a unique Being with no equal, no likeness. All kinds of uniqueness inhere His Being, and this Being is of God, the Almighty. The concept of the one God is the central concept of Islam: it is this belief which is the essence of Islam and the sole source of all of its teachings.

## WHO ARE ANGELS?

Angels are loyal and obedient creatures of God, endowed with special powers and authority to facilitate the workings of the universe.

**A**ngels are among the creatures created by God. They have been endowed with special powers. They have all the power and authority to facilitate the workings of the universe. But all their actions are in total submission to God; not even in the minutest

degree do they deviate from the instructions given by God.

At every moment, there are innumerable happenings in the universe. For instance, the orbiting of the stars, the shining of the sun and the moon and the rotation of the earth. Similarly, the rains, changes in the weather, diverse cosmic events, the continuous habitation of man and the animals on earth, and other such countless happenings as are constantly taking place in the world. All of these are arranged by the angels. The angels are completely loyal and obedient workers.

The angels are invisible to human beings but human beings are visible to them. They keep a watch over human beings on God's behalf. It is these angels who have the power to take a person's soul at the time of death, and bring that soul to God.

The angels are facilitators of this present universe as well as the organizers of heaven and hell in the Hereafter. These angels are countless in number.

The functioning of the angels may be illustrated by the example of a big factory. In a big factory, there are on the one hand large and complex machines and on the other hand is the product of the machines for

which the factory has been built. But these machines do not function on their own. For them to function, human workers are required. Therefore, in every factory a number of human workers are there to make the machines work in the desired way. Similarly, in the vast factory of the universe, there has to be the instrumentality of countless angels for everything to happen as it should. The difference between the two factories is that in the earthly factories, the human workers are visible, whereas in the universal factory, the workers or the angels are not visible to the human eye.

## WHO ARE THE PROPHETS?

The Prophet is an intermediary between God and man. He takes God's messages and conveys it to human beings.

A prophet is one who has been selected to represent God on earth. When God chooses a human being as His messenger, His angel comes to him to inform him of this selection. In this way, he is left in no doubt that he is indeed God's messenger. Afterwards, God sends him His teachings through the angel so that he may

inform all human beings of God's will. The prophet is an intermediary between God and man. He takes from God His message and conveys it to human beings.

God has bestowed human beings with reason but, through reason alone, an individual cannot understand the deeper realities of the present life. So far as God and the world Hereafter are concerned, this is totally related to the invisible world and as such, these things are beyond human reason and understanding. What the prophet does is fulfil this need of every individual. The Prophet informs a person of the realities of life, and of the world Hereafter. In this way, he enables people to plan their life in the full light of divine knowledge.

From the time that people inhabited this world, the prophets started arriving in every age. They told humans of God's will but, there are no authentic records of the teachings of the prophets of ancient times. The later circumstances failed to authenticate their personalities as factually historical and their books also suffered the same fate.

The Quran records the history of the prophets. It refers to more than two dozen prophets of different times and different races. God sent every prophet with the same message, but in different places and

situations. In this sense, all the prophets are equal; every prophet is a source of guidance.

Finally, God chose the Prophet Muhammad as His Messenger. He was born at a time when world history had begun to be put on record. Subsequently, with the invention of the printing press, he became widely acknowledged as a historically established figure, and the Book divinely revealed to him, was preserved for all eternity. Ultimately, there was no possibility that any changes could be made in this divine book he had brought to the world. The Prophet Muhammad was the final messenger to humanity. No prophet will come after him.

## PROPHET MUHAMMAD

Prophet Muhammad was the final Prophet for all mankind. Through him Islam's original sources were preserved: God's Book, the Quran was revealed and preserved, and his traditions, Hadith and Sunnah were recorded.

**M**ohammad bin Abdullah bin Abdul Muttalib was chosen as the last prophet by Almighty God in 610 AD in Mecca. In the Prophet Mohammad (May

peace be upon him), God saw a man in whom the fires of human nature burnt bright, and in whom there was no contradiction of thought, word and deed. In the forty years before he attained prophethood, he had never once betrayed a trust. He was strictly honest in his dealings, true to his word, and deeply compassionate towards the human beings all around him. Most important of all, he had a profound desire for the truth, which went far and beyond all craving for profit.

In Mohammad, son of Abdullah, (peace and God's blessings be upon him) God found a pure soul, untarnished by self-interest, and totally uncompromising on the question of right and wrong. He saw in him a man selflessly devoted to the discharge of his duties, and one who would never stoop to idolatrous beliefs. Most important, God had found in this desert Arab a genuine seeker after the truth. It could only be such as he who would appreciate to the full the divine revelations with which he would be entrusted, and who would be fully alive to the resultant obligation. It was precisely because this most perfect of men had shown himself to be so consistently virtuous over the first forty years of his life that God chose him as His final Prophet for all

mankind. During the ensuing thirty-three years of his prophethood, Mohammad proved that God's trust in him had not been misplaced, for he carried out his prophetic duties with the highest imaginable degree of integrity. There could have been no conceivably superior fulfillment of the responsibilities entailed by prophethood.

It is thanks to the Prophet that God's Book, the Quran, as communicated to him by God's Angel, has been handed down to us in pure and pristine form, thus making it possible for us to find in His Scriptures a clear description of all those qualities and observances, which our Lord requires of us. In the Quran, God converses with us in human language, and, if His words are as clear to us today as at the time of their utterance, it is because of the special care taken by the Prophet and his companions to ensure that God's Book would be preserved in its original form, unmarred by interpolation, alteration or omission.

Not only did the Prophet receive God's Revelations, but he also practiced them to perfection throughout his entire life. He thus provided a living example of how Quranic teaching should be followed. They are recorded in the traditions of the Prophet, the Sunnah for all to follow. It was easy for people to see and

understand the examples he set, for he lived the life of any normal family – mixing freely with people in the town and market place. Like any other ordinary individual he had friends and enemies, and knew what it meant to win or lose, fail or succeed. But what made him different from the ordinary run of men was the sublimity of his character. No matter what situation he found himself in, he always set a shining example. From a position of affluence and security he was reduced to suffering poverty, hunger, pain and rejection – all in the attempt to preach the Faith. But, no matter how adverse the circumstances in which he found himself, he never failed to evince this perfection of character. Conversely, when he rose from the level of an ordinary man to become a judge and a ruler, having ultimately set up the pillars of Islam, this excellence of disposition never left him for an instant. Indeed, his entire life was marked by such divine characteristics that it has become a model for mankind for all eternity.

## LIFE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD

Prophet Muhammad (571-623) was the seal of the prophets. Through him the divine religion sent to all prophets was preserved for all mankind till Doomsday in the form of the Quran and Sunnah. For seekers of Truth his life and teachings serve as a model, beckoning all to the true path.

**M**uhammad meaning the praised one was born in 571 in the North Arabian city of Makkah, which was then inhabited mainly by the tribe of Quraysh. In those times, this tribe enjoyed throughout Arabia and the neighbouring countries great prestige on account of the position of their city as a flourishing trade and religious centre.

Their caravans, which journeyed to Syria and Yaman, and the most ancient shrine of Kabah at Makkah annually drew a great number of Arabian pilgrims. Though most of the Arabians were then idol-worshippers, several other religions, including Christianity and Judaism, had followers in Arabia. But none of those other religions could claim to have been at any time the religion of more than a negligible minority.

Muhammad's family belonged to one of the noble clans of Quraysh—the clan of Banu Hashim. He grew

up as an orphan. His father Abdullah died before he was born and his mother Amina died when he was six years old. It fell first to his grandfather Abdul Muttalib to take care of him and then to his uncle Abu Talib. As from his early youth he impressed his countrymen as a person of high integrity, and they called him the trustworthy (Al-Ameen).

When Muhammad was twenty five years old, he married Khadija, a wealthy and noble widow who had engaged him to handle her caravan trade and who had developed great admiration and respect for his noble character.

Khadija was very broadminded and understanding. Khadija being a very wealthy lady, Prophet now had all the opportunity to lead a happy, contented life. But Prophet was a truth-seeker. He was not content with the pleasures of this material world. He would, therefore, retire for days to a cave called Hira on a hill near Makkah for meditation and spiritual devotion. When in 610 A.D. he received his Divine call in that cave Khadija was the first to recognize him as the Apostle of Allah and to convert to Islam. She remaining until her death in 620 A.D. a source of comfort and support to him. She gladly spent all her wealth in the cause of Islam.

In the fortieth year of his life, one day, while he was sitting in the solitude of the cave, an angel of God appeared before him in human shape, and addressed him with the words of God:

“Announce in the name of thy Lord, that He hath created, created man from a clot—Announce! And thy Lord is most generous. Who hath afforded knowledge through the pen, afforded man the Knowledge of what he knew not...” (*The Quran*, 96:1-5)

The Prophet had found the answers to his questions. “Have We not broadened thy heart for thee, and relieved thee of thy burden which had weighed down thy back ...” (*The Quran*, 94:1-3) His restless soul was now in communion with the Lord of the Universe. God now chose him as His special envoy and gave him guidance. The Revelation of God began descending upon him and continued to do so for twenty three years, at the end of which time, the last Scripture of God, the Quran, reached completion.

In the twelfth year of his mission the Prophet was taken to heavens, this journey is known as Miraj (ascent). The Quran has referred to this event in the chapter entitled: Al-Isra (The Night Journey) “Praise be to Him who carried his servant by night from the Masjidul Haram (Kabah) to the Masjidul Aqsa (Jerusalem)”.

Muhammad's career as Prophet lasted for about 23 years, about half of which he spent in Makkah and the rest in Madinah, which lies about 280 miles north of Makkah. During the first period, his efforts to win the Makkans to Islam met with vehement opposition, and in 622 A.D. he had to emigrate, along with the few followers he had been able to convert, to Madinah. Here the Prophet was given a hearty welcome, and moved from one success to another. By the time he died in 632 A.D. he had united all Arabia under the banner of Islam and completed his message to mankind.

## THE TEACHINGS OF THE PROPHET

The teachings of Prophet Muhammad bring God's servants in contact with the Creator, make them understand how to establish a relationship with God and helps them understand the purpose of their life, so that they can achieve eternal salvation.

I would like to state here briefly the message which has been given to us by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him (PBUH)). This message can be placed under three headings:

1. The right concept of God.

2. The purpose behind man's creation and his relation with the universe.
3. What man should do to establish his relationship with God?

The first thing the Prophet has told us is that there is a God of this universe. He is the one and only God and has no partner in any capacity. He is Almighty and He is the controller of all the happenings in the Universe. Here I would like to quote a verse from the Quran which expresses fully and succinctly the Islamic concept of God:

God: there is no deity save Him, the Living, the Eternal One. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth. Who can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows all that is before them and all that is behind them. They can grasp only that part of His knowledge which He wills. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth; and their upholding does not weary Him. He is the Sublime, the Almighty One! (2:255)

Other matters explained by God's Prophet are the purpose of man's creation and His relation with the universe. He made it clear that since man was born

to be tested, he had been granted freedom of action and God had conveyed to him His Will. Now the Lord wants to see who obeys His will and who does not. The relation of man with the universe is also subservient to this purpose. This universe is not the monopoly or property of any person or nation. Neither is it a haphazard place. It is designed rather to help man in discharging the duties assigned to him by God. This world is, in fact, our field of action where we have been placed to take our test. This is the position of the world. A time has been fixed for this test. The time for an individual is the duration of his lifespan, and the time for entire humanity will extend till doomsday. After that the Lord of the universe will gather all men and women together and will reward or punish them in accordance with their deeds. And then those who pass this test will be rewarded with paradise and those who fail will be sent to Hell. This will take place in the life Hereafter. The present world is the beginning of our life and the Hereafter will be our final destination. In this way God has made us aware of our future. This future world has been kept hidden from our eyes, which was necessary if we are to be tested here. But when this testing period is over, this hidden world will appear before us with the same clarity as this present

world is visible to us now We know only the world which is visible to us, yet the reality of a thing is not just what it appears to be. Sunlight appears to be of a bright yellow colour. But, in fact, it is a combination of seven bright colours. In exactly the same way, there is another life hidden in our present life. We will see this life only after death.

The life hereafter is not a purely metaphysical concept: it is profoundly related to our lives. History tells us that when man becomes free from the fear of God, there is nothing to check him from oppressing and exploiting others. Those who have tried reform by means of law and politics have only re-introduced exploitation in a new form. There has been no change in the real situation. Real reform is possible only when man has an inner urge to opt for the right path and shun the wrong one. The only thing that can produce this inner feeling is the fear that he is accountable to God in the next life. We are compelled to take the support of the Hereafter to make man just and honest. There is no other way to achieve this objective.

There are certain people who hold that the concept of the life hereafter is an imaginary one. And if the argument they use to prove their contention is taken to be valid, then the entire universe shall have to be

taken as imaginary, including our own existence. But at this point I will not discuss this in detail. I can only say that if the Hereafter is imaginary, then why is it that without it we cannot build a social system in the real sense?

Remove this concept from human minds and our life becomes disorderly. Can anything which is so essential for life have no real existence? Is there any example to be found in this universe of something which allegedly has no existence in reality but is still so real, or of something which is considered so irrelevant to life but has so much relevance? The concept of the Hereafter is absolutely necessary for the right and just organization of life. This necessity itself shows that the Hereafter is the greatest reality of this universe. Although it remains invisible to the eye, it is the most certain and most real of all the things in this world. This is quite undeniable.

The third thing which we have been told by the Prophet of God (PBUH) provides an answer to what man should do to establish his relationship with God. This can be expressed under three separate headings: Zikr, Ibadat, Qurbani.

Zikr (remembrance) means to keep God in mind all

the time. God should be remembered in all aspects in the way laid down by the Prophet.

*Ibadat* (worship) means those acts which have been set forth in the Shariah so that the spiritual aspect of man is made to prevail over his material aspect. For this, such ways of worship are prescribed as to bring man psychologically closer to God.

*Qurbani* (sacrifice) means sacrificing one's feelings and emotions and wealth for the cause of God. When man sacrifices the things dear to him in the name of God, it is as if he makes his feelings subservient to God. In this way, this sacrifice brings him very close to his Lord. This remembrance of the Lord and worship and sacrifice are not separate from one another but are different manifestations of the same reality. They are an expression of the extreme attachment of man to his Lord. When man remembers his dearest God with all his heart and all his soul, it is called *zikr*. When overcome by his feelings, he surrenders himself wholly to God, it is worship. And when he gives away his possessions in the path of God, it is called sacrifice. The Prophet guides us on this path and brings God's servants in contact with the Creator.

## QURAN

### Word of God

The Quran is the preserved divine book. Being a completely reliable source of divine guidance, the Quran manifests God's mercy for all.

**T**here are 114 verses in the Quran. Everything that has been laid down in the Quran can be summed up thus: an individual should believe in the one God, and hold himself accountable to Him alone. He should discover that the Prophet Muhammad was a messenger who conveyed God's guidance to humanity.

The Quran is a sacred book sent by God for everyone. It is a book for all because it has been sent by God, Who is the Creator of all mankind.

The Quran is not a new holy book. It is, in effect, a preserved version of the previous divine books. In this sense, the Quran is a book for all human beings and for all nations. The Quran manifests God's mercy for all. It is the message of God sent by Him for everyone. The Quran is a light of guidance for the whole world, just as the sun is a source of light and heat for the whole world.

## HADITH

### Traditions of Prophet Muhammad

The Hadith is a collection of the words and deeds of the Prophet. The Quran gives us the theoretical guidance, while the Hadith gives us the practical framework.

**T**he Quran is God's word both in word and meaning. The Hadith is that collection of words and deeds which convey God's message, but, so far as its words are concerned, those are the very words spoken by the Prophet. While the Quran presents direct guidance from God, the Hadith presents indirect guidance.

There are many books of Hadith, some of which are of particular importance. For instance, Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Jami al-Tirmidhi, Sunan Abu Dawood, Sunan an-Nasai, Sunan Ibn Majah, Muwatta Imam Malik and Musnad Ahmad.

The Hadith constitutes an interpretation and elaboration of the Quran. In the Quran, mostly basic commands have been given, details of which can be learned from the prophetic traditions. Similarly, the Hadith gives us practical framework for the theoretical guidance of the Quran. The importance of the Hadith

is such that it cannot be considered separate from the Quran.

The books of Hadith give commands and teachings relating to all the aspects of life, for instance, what a Muslim should be like in his intention and thinking. They specify the details of worship, set an example of how to deal with people in daily life—and in particular, how to address them. They define the limitations in food and drinks and explain what the family structure should be. They explain what the basis of social relations should be and how to settle life's issues in a peaceable manner.

All those matters which relate to human life and on which success in this world and Hereafter depends, are set forth in detail in the books of Hadith. Without a study of the Hadith, we cannot complete the study of Islam and neither can we know the Islamic teachings for leading life in this world.

The corpus of Hadith is the greatest source of Islamic teaching after the Quran. Once a hadith is proved to be an authentic part of the legacy of the Prophet of Islam, we have to accept it as we do the Quran.

# ISLAM

## Submission to God

Islam is the religion of submission to God. Accepting Islam shapes one's thinking. Subsequently, his desires, his feelings, his interests – everything becomes dyed in the hue of obedience of God.

**I**slam means submission. The name Islam has been given to this religion because it is based on submission to God. A Muslim is one who is subservient to God in thought, word and deed. All his dealings are done in obedience to God. He bows to God's will in all matters. Islam is the religion of the entire universe, for all the parts of the universe are functioning according to the principles laid down by God.

The same conformity to divine principles is desired of humans also. A person has to live as God's faithful servant just as the rest of the universe totally obeys its Creator. The only difference is that the universe obeys God as a matter of compulsion, while a human being is required to follow divine injunctions of his own free will.

When a person adopts Islam, it is first of all his thinking which is shaped by Islam. Subsequently his desires, his feelings, his interests, his relations—everything become dyed in the hue of God.

Then comes his daily life—his behaviour and dealings with others are moulded according to the virtues upheld by Islam. In short, both internally and externally he becomes an obedient person.

A human being is created by God, so the right attitude for the believer is to live in submission to God in this world. In Islam, the right way of life is to live in conformity with the will of the Lord. The other kind of life is one which is lived independently of God's awareness and marked by arrogance.

## IMAN

### **Belief in God**

For a believer, faith becomes a source of limitless trust in God. Faith transforms his whole personality. His entire life becomes oriented towards the Hereafter.

**T**he reality or essence of faith is discovery of God. When a person becomes aware of God's existence and apprehends divine realities, that is true faith.

Such a discovery is no simple matter. God is the Creator and Lord of all things, He is the One who awards punishment and no one can escape His grasp.

The discovery of such a God has a profound effect upon the whole life of the individual. His thinking is revolutionized to the extent that God becomes the centre of all his emotions.

As a consequence, the believer surrenders him being to God. God becomes the centre of all his attention. Now he becomes a person whose life and death are for God alone.

The result of this faith is that a person's behaviour throughout his life becomes dyed in the hue of God. When he speaks, he is conscious that God is hearing him and when he walks, he takes care that his way of walking is not of one who struts arrogantly. When he deals with people, he is fearful lest he do anything unjust such as would incur God's punishment.

As a result of this faith, a person's entire life becomes oriented towards the Hereafter. In all matters, his eyes are on the Hereafter. In this world, instead of temporary gains, he makes the gains of the Hereafter the centre of his attention. When there are two sides to any matter – the worldly side and the otherworldly side, he ignores the consideration of this world and chooses what would be of value in the life Hereafter.

For him this faith becomes a source of limitless trust in God. At all times and in all events he puts his trust

in God. Faith in essence is to have recognized the Lord when this recognition or discovery becomes a part and parcel of a person's heart and mind. Then his whole personality is transformed. He becomes a new human being.

## THE TRIAL OF MAN

If man, in spite of having freedom, submits to God and leads a principled life in this world, he will be held deserving of Paradise in the Hereafter.

**I**n the present world, every human being is free. God has not set any constraints upon a person. But this freedom is for the purpose of putting him to the test rather than allowing him to lead an unrestrained life. This freedom does not mean that a person should lead his life permissively and then die one day. Its purpose is rather that a person should lead a life of principle of his own will and intention. Of his own will, he should bind himself to obeying high moral principles.

The purpose of creating a human being in this way is to give him the opportunity to be the most superior of the creatures so that he may be credited with being one of those special beings who bound himself to living a

principled life, in spite of having no compulsion to do so. All things in this world are subjected to God. The stars and planets in space revolve in their orbits totally under the command of God. The trees, the rivers, the mountains— all these things strictly follow the plan laid down for them by God. On a parallel with this, the animals follow the pattern determined for them by their instincts. They are totally governed by their instincts. In this world human beings, as an exception, have been granted the blessings of freedom and power.

This freedom offers two different paths to a person. One leads him to becoming arrogant and insolent, and leading an unrestricted life. This would mean his failing in his test paper.

On the other hand will be those who make right and proper use of their freedom. Although there is no compulsion for them to adhere to divine principles, they will be successful in their test. They will be given rewards by God, such as no other creature can merit. They will be held to be those of God's servants, who have earned nearness to God. And they will live a life of comfort and happiness eternally in Paradise.

## CREATION PLAN OF GOD

According to the creation plan of God the present world is a place for preparation while the next eternal world is the place to reap the rewards of one's actions.

God has a plan for human beings. The plan is that every human being be put in this world for a limited period of time in order to test him, then whoever measures up to the test is accepted and rewarded by God. Those who do not pass this test will be rejected outright.

To meet the exigencies of the test, a person has been given freedom in his life in this world. Here what an individual receives is not his rights: it is only a test paper. Every situation is a test paper, and in every situation, one has to rise to the occasion.

It is not proper for a person to be carried away by his desires and whims. The right attitude for him is that he should try to understand the creation plan of God and, accepting that, build his life accordingly.

By misusing his freedom in this present world, he can deviate from the divine plan, but he cannot save himself from the consequences thereof.

And in such a situation, it is in the interests of everyone to be extremely prudent in determining the course

his or her life will take. Instead of being guided by his own wishes a person should be guided by God's will. Instead of chasing after his desires, he should lead a life in accordance with divine principles.

Every human being is a divine creation, but at the same time, he is subject to the creation plan of God. It is in acceding to this that he will discover the secret of human progress.

Just as humans have achieved success in building a modern industrial civilization by discovering the laws of nature and making use of them, so also, in the next eternal world humans will have a greater success only when they place God's creation plan for humanity in the right perspective and then adopt that plan for building their lives here in this world.

## ACTIONS DEPEND UPON INTENTION

Intention relates to one's thinking or inner state. Any act which is done without the right intention is valueless in the eyes of God.

**I**ntention is of utmost important in Islam. No act, simply on account of its appearance of being

commendable can be acceptable to God. God accepts only such deeds as have been performed with the right intention. No act done with evil intention is acceptable to God.

When a person performs some task solely for God's pleasure and with the aim of being rewarded for it in the Hereafter, that shows he is a person of good intention.

On the contrary, when a person acts in a way that is ostensibly religious, with the hope of promoting some worldly interest thereby, receiving appreciation, gaining in popularity among others and finding a place of honour among them, that shows an evil intention.

Intention relates to one's thinking or inner state. People may not be able to discover the inner state of a person's mind when he performs a certain action. But God is fully cognizant of what is going on in his mind. He knows what kind of feelings he had at that time. People may mistake an evil act for a good act, but God has full knowledge of all things and will deal with everyone accordingly. He will reward a person exactly as he deserves.

The significance of intention is that of truth and meaningfulness. When something is lacking in truth and meaningfulness, it is of no value. Indeed, any act which is done without the right intention is valueless.

It has no importance either in the eyes of people or in the eyes of God.

An act is worthy of esteem only when it is pure in intention. Any act done without the right intention is impure in nature.

## CONCEPT OF HEREAFTER

God created man as an eternal creature, dividing his life into two parts. A small part in this world is for action and the eternal life in the Hereafter is to reap its reward.

**H**uman beings have been created as eternal creatures. However, God has divided a person's lifespan into two parts. A very small part of his lifespan has been destined to be lived out in the present world while the rest has been destined for the world after death. The present world is a place for action, while the world Hereafter is a place where the rewards for that action will be reaped.

Where the present world is defective, the world Hereafter is perfect in every respect. The Hereafter is a limitless world. There all things have been provided in an ideal state.

God has placed Paradise in the world of the Hereafter. Paradise is full of all kinds of blessings. Those who prove to be true worshippers of God and who lead virtuous lives will enter this world of Hereafter. When they enter this world of the Hereafter, the door of Paradise will be opened to them for all eternity.

But those who lead a life of unmindfulness of God in the present world or who lead lives marked by arrogance and insolence are sinners in the eyes of God. All such people will be denied the blessings of the Hereafter.

In the present world God is invisible. But in the world Hereafter, He will appear in all His power and glory, and, at that time, all human beings will surrender before Him. But surrendering at that time will be of no avail. Surrendering before God is acceptable only when it is done in this present world before being able to see God. In the Hereafter, surrendering after seeing God will benefit no one.

Death is not the end of life for a person, rather, it is the beginning of the next stage of life. Death is the middle stage when a person leaves the temporary world of today and reaches the permanent world of tomorrow. He leaves the ephemerality of this world and enters the eternal world. This stage of the Hereafter will be faced inevitably by everyone. There is no one who

can save himself from being called to account in the Hereafter.

## PARADISE AND HELL

Paradise is a place of divine blessings, while Hell is totally the opposite. Those who pass the divine test in the present world will enter eternal life of Paradise where they will receive all comforts, luxuries and happiness they desire.

Paradise is a place of divine blessings and Hell is a place where those who have been awarded punishment by God's court will be cast. There are all kinds of blessings in the present world but they are in an imperfect form. Paradise is the place where all these blessings will be there for everyone in a perfect form. Whereas the present world is not an ideal world, the world of Paradise is a completely ideal world. Those who arrive after passing the divine test in the present world will enter into the eternal life of Paradise where they will have all the comforts, luxuries and happiness they desire.

In Paradise, along with material blessings a person will also have mental peace and contentment. On the one hand, material blessings will be showered upon him,

and on the other hand, all those disadvantages which caused him all sorts of restlessness and discomfort will be absent, for example, old age, disease, accidents, death, and so on.

Everyone is desirous of an ideal world right from the time of his birth. Everyone mentally cherishes the world of his dreams. But such a world can never materialize for anyone in the present life. After death, however, this world will become a reality for those fortunate souls who are held deserving of it according to their deeds in their lives before death.

In essence, Hell is totally the opposite. If Paradise is a place which gives all kinds of comforts, Hell is a place which gives all kinds of pain.

## RABBANIYAT

### Islamic Spirituality

Spirituality is described as leading a God-oriented life (*rabbaniyat*), a life based on higher principles, remaining unaffected by the negative actions of others.

**T**he true Islamic concept of spiritualism is based on the concept of dualism or the duality of reality —

that the Creator and the creature are completely separate from one another. God, according to this concept, has a real and eternal existence based on *tawheed* or monotheism.

According to the Islamic concept of spirituality or *Rabbaniyat*, the target of the spiritual quest of man is that the creature – man – has to discover and realize God – his Creator, to whom he is accountable, and make contact with Him through the process of contemplation or *tafakkur* or *tadabbur* or *tawassum* as mentioned in the Quran. That is to say that God is the treasure house of all virtues. And when man's contact with God is established, through contemplation, in the world of his feelings, at the psychological level, an unseen, inner revolution is brought about which is called *rabbaniyat* or spirituality. In this matter the relationship between God and man can be likened to an electric wire and the powerhouse. When the wire is connected to the powerhouse, electricity is produced, and the place is lit up. In this way, light is the result of the wire's connection to the powerhouse of God.

What is spirituality? God has demonstrated it eternally in the form of the rose bush. The rose bush has thorns as well as flowers. Amidst sharp thorns God grows flowers on its branches which have beautifully shaped petals and which spread their fragrance all around.

This is an example of spirituality set by nature. Spirituality is the name of living like a flower amidst thorns. Spirituality is what prevents a person from embroiling himself in thorns. He is not provoked when goaded. Unpleasant experiences do not disturb his calm and composure. The unpleasant behaviour of others does not arouse in him feelings of anger and revenge. He lives according to his own principles. His intellectual level rises so high and is so sublime that a stone thrown at him does not reach him. In the Quran, spirituality is described as leading a God-oriented life (*rabbaniyat*). Those who lead God-oriented lives, do not become influenced by the people around them. The thinking of those who can rise above their mundane environment and live at a godly level, becomes independent of what people say about them. That is, they are not influenced by idle chatter. They find such great things in the state of spirituality that everything else pales into insignificance.

The spiritual person is so empowered that he can even smile at abuses hurled at him. He is able to forgive one who makes him angry, and can forget that person's words and deeds. He is able to welcome the thorns which accompany the flowers.

The spiritual person finds such great things in his own spirituality (*rabbaniyat*) that he is not driven by desire. His spirituality banishes feelings of jealousy and selfishness, and he never feels exploited. His own spirituality is so fulfilling that he seeks nothing beyond that. When such spiritual people come together, they present a society which shines like the sun and blooms like the flowers in a garden.

## TAQWA

### God-Consciousness

Fear of God (*taqwa*) means leading a principled life, that is, controlling one's desires and curbing all negative impulses.

**F**earing God (*taqwa*) means leading a life of restraint in this world. Restraint means controlling one's desires and curbing all negative impulses.

Umar Faruq once asked another Companion of the Prophet what it meant to go in fear of God. The Companion replied, "O Leader of the believers, have you ever walked along a path which is lined on both sides with thorn bushes?" When he received a reply in the affirmative, the Companion asked what he had

done on this occasion. Umar replied, “I gathered my clothes about me and walked carefully along the path.” The Companion remarked, “That is how one goes in fear of God.” (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, 1 / 164)

The present world is a testing ground. Here, to put a person to the test, many thorns are strewn everywhere, such as all kinds of negativity, and having to deal with frivolous people who have issue, which do not merit serious attention. Then there are worldly attractions which distract us. There are also unpleasant circumstances or factors which disturb us mentally and cause us to deviate from the path of virtue.

All these things are like thorny bushes on both sides of the road. At all times there is the fear getting of entangled in these bushes. And then, instead of going forward, one is deterred there.

In such a situation the wise person is one who traverses worldly paths by gathering his clothes about him. And then instead of being embroiled in unpleasant things, he goes on advancing by avoidance of adversity. In all situations he is careful to exercise total self-control. He has to opt for the path of avoidance rather than tread the path of entanglement.

Human beings have been created upright by nature. If nothing bars a person's way, he will, on his own, walk in the right direction. Therefore, a person must not let unnatural obstacles hinder his onward progress. In consequence, by the power of his own nature, he will take the right direction until he meets his Lord.

## SHUKR

### Gratitude to God

All forms of worship, are, in essence, manifestations of the feeling of that gratefulness, which is at the heart of a God-oriented life. Gratitude entails acknowledgement of God's blessings.

**G**ratitude means acknowledging the blessings of God. This acknowledgement has to be heartfelt, and only then does it take verbal form.

Human beings have been created with the best of bodies and the best of minds. All our requirements have been amply provided for. All the things of the earth and the heavens have been pressed into our service. All the things which we require to lead a life on earth or to build a civilization have been bestowed on us in abundance.

These blessings are showered upon an individual at all times. It is, therefore, incumbent upon him to repeatedly express his acknowledgement of God's blessings. His heart should then overflow with the feeling of gratitude.

All forms of worship, are, in essence, manifestation of the feeling of that gratefulness, which is at the heart of a God-oriented life. Gratefulness itself is the most complete form of worship and relates to a person's entire existence.

Initially, a person refreshes the feeling of gratitude in his heart and mind and then he expresses it repeatedly in verbal form. Subsequently, when these feelings of gratefulness intensify, he starts giving his wealth and his possessions in the path of God, as a way of expressing his thankfulness to Him. Moreover, his feeling of thankfulness compels him to spend his time and energy in the path of God. His whole existence is given to him by God. The world we live in is totally a divine gift. Another name for gratitude is acknowledgement or expression of this reality.

## ZIKR

### Remembrance of God

The words that spontaneously spring from one's lips when one's mind overflows with spiritual feelings of his Lord's beneficence is the essence of zikr.

**R**emembrance of God is one of the basic teachings of Islam. Forgetfulness of God shows indifference, whereas remembrance of God shows attentiveness to the divine will.

Such remembrance is a natural reality. A human being at every moment, experiences such things as are directly related to God. That is, he observes the sun and the moon, the rivers and the mountains, the air and the water,—and sees that everything has been created by God. Similarly, all the creatures that he sees in the world are reminders of the Creator. Right from the earth to the heavens, all things are reflections of God's beauty and perfection. With their entire existence, they testify to God's being. As such, they draw a person towards his Creator.

At every moment, an individual is reminded of God by the things amidst which he spends his days and nights in this world. Influenced by these things, his heart and mind overflow with spiritual feelings of remembrance of God.

Throughout his life a person repeatedly experiences such a connection with God, as causes him to ponder upon his existence, and his heart is filled with the sense that it is God who has created him in the best of moulds and given him all kinds of abilities in abundance. These feelings come to his lips in various ways in different words again and again. This is a true form of remembrance.

A person in his daily life has to come to grips with various ups and downs, and undergo different kinds of experiences, both pleasant and unpleasant. At these times, he focuses his attention on God. Again and again, he remembers God in different words.

In this way, during his daily worship, he repeats aloud various words and phrases. These words are sometimes derived from the Quran and Hadith, and at other time, in acknowledgement of his Lord's beneficence, they spring spontaneously to his lips. All this is remembrance of God.

## SALAT

### Prayer Instills Modesty in a Worshipper

Prayer prepares man to lead a virtuous life. It inculcates in the worshipper the spirit of modesty that enhances one's connection with God that enhances one's connection with God as well as with other human beings.

Prayer, or salah, is worship of God. It has been made obligatory on believers five times a day. Congregational prayer is offered in the mosque.

Before saying prayers, the worshipper performs ablutions. Face, hands and feet, are washed with water to awaken the feeling in the suppliant that he should always lead a pious life. Then, by uttering *Allahu Akbar* (God is the greatest) he enters into the act of worship. In this way, he accepts that greatness belongs solely to God. The greatest virtue is to live in this world with modesty.

In the course of the prayer, the worshipper has to recite certain passages from the Quran. In this way, he recalls to mind God's commandments. Then he bows down and prostrates himself. This is saying by his actions that for him only one course is proper, and that is to lead his life in this world as an obedient servant of God.

When this act of prayer comes to an end, and the worshippers turn their heads to both sides, and say *Assalamu alaykum warahmatullah* (May peace and blessings be upon you), it is as if these believers who have offered their prayers are now fully imbued with a sense of their religious obligations. And they are now entering into the world with no wishes in their hearts for others except mercy and peace. They will live from now on in society as peace-loving members, and will have no ill-feeling towards their fellow men.

Offering prayers is in one respect the worship of God. It is an acknowledgement of God and God's godhead. It means surrendering before God, acknowledging Him as the one for whom all greatness is reserved.

In another respect, prayer prepares a individual to lead his life as an upright person amongst others. While dealing with others his attitude is then one of modesty and sympathy – enhances one's connection with God as well as with other human beings.

## SAWM

### **Fasting Teaches Restraint**

Fasting reinforces moral discipline that enables a person to lead his life as a worshipper of God and as a well-wisher of all mankind.

**F**asting is a form of worship which is performed annually. Each year in the month of Ramazan (the ninth month of the lunar calendar), fasting is observed for the whole month. During the period of fasting, at God's behest, the believer abstains from eating from dawn to sundown. He moreover engages himself in more profound worship and remembrance of God. This act of fasting is done so that a person's materialism may be minimized and his spirituality may make progress. He is then enabled to lead a spiritual life in this world. Fasting awakens in a person the feeling of gratitude. This ritual deprivation of food and water highlights the importance of these blessings. Then when he has experienced hunger and thirst and eats only in the evening, he realizes how precious are the food and water which have been provided to him by God. This experience greatly increases his feelings of gratitude. Fasting reinforces moral discipline. By curtailing the use of certain things, a person is conditioned to leading a life of moral constraint in this world.

Fasting is like a kind of speed breaker. By having to exercise self-control for one month, the believer learns the lesson that he has to lead a life of restraint not just for a month or a year but for his entire lifetime. He must not try to break through the boundaries set by God.

By observing this fast, a person engages himself more and more in worship, in recitation of the Quran and in remembrance of God. Fasting accentuates the effects of acts of worship. In this way, remembrance of God, worship and recitation of the Quran become more effectual.

Fasting is a kind of special training course extending over a whole one month designed to enable a person to lead his life as a worshipper of God and as one who feels good will towards all of mankind.

## ZAKAT

### The Law of Almsgiving

Almsgiving, Zakat, is given to human beings, but, in reality it creates a bond between man and his Creator. The spirit of charity is worship; its external manifestation is an act of social service.

**A**lms is a fixed amount which a person who is materially well-endowed has to give from his

wealth at the end of the year. In this way, he purifies his possessions. By giving a part of his wealth in the way of God, he legitimizes the use of the rest for his own purposes.

The setting aside of a fixed amount from his earnings as alms is a practical demonstration or acknowledgement of the fact that the real giver is God. When God is the giver, His servant is obliged to spend from his wealth in the cause of God.

The law of almsgiving prescribes the taking of wealth from the wealthy and giving it to the poor. This, in effect, is a redistribution of wealth and, as such, is a way of reflecting the inequality in society. In this way, those who are wealthy are reminded of the fact that they are responsible for those who have received less in the division of wealth.

Almsgiving also buttresses morality. For one thing, one who gives alms avoids being miserly and having feelings of selfishness. It reinforces in him the spirit of giving, human friendliness and generosity. For another thing, the receiver of alms comes to regard others as his brothers and becomes their well-wisher, rather than feel jealous of them.

Since alms are given in the cause of God, that

establishes almsgiving as one of the forms of worship. Apparently, it is given to human beings but, in reality, it links a person to God, creating a bond between him and his Creator. In spirit, giving in charity is a way of worship; in its external manifestation, it is an act of social service.

## CHARITY

### Well-Wishing of Others

Charity is an expression of well-wishing for others. When this spirit of charity is born within a person, it finds expression on all occasions.

**I**t is desirable in Islam that everyone should be imbued with the spirit of charity. On all occasions he should be ready to give alms. The Prophet of Islam once observed that every Muslim is exhorted to give alms. When asked if the person concerned did not have anything to give, the Prophet replied he should work and earn and then he should keep some of his earnings for himself and give the rest to others. Then again he was asked what the person should do if he was unable to earn. The Prophet said, then he should help the needy. Again he was asked what he should do

if he couldn't help the needy. The Prophet replied, he should urge others to do good. He was asked what if he could not do this either. Then the Prophet observed that he should refrain from doing evil as that is also a form of charity. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, 1445)

Alms-giving is not an occasional act. It has to be performed with regularity. When this spirit of charity is born within one it finds expression at all times. One who possesses this charitable spirit will surely act in accordance with it.

Charity in fact, expresses well-wishing for others. When this spirit of well-wishing is awakened, a person feels the inner compulsion to help others. If he has money he will help others with it. If he does not have money, he will earn some so that he may meet his own requirements and then give the rest to others. And if he does not have money, he will try to help others with his other capabilities, for instance, removing thorns from the path, or guiding travellers. This feeling will sometimes express itself in the form of urging others to do good. To reform others, he will say good words to them. The last form of charity is that he should save others from such of his actions as may harm them.

## HAJJ

### Pilgrimage to Makkah

Pilgrimage, Hajj brings a person closer to God and his prophets, creating a living relationship with the history of Islam. Hajj unites God-worshippers worldwide.

**H**ajj, one of the pillars of Islam, is a form of worship. For those who have the resources to perform Hajj, it is obligatory for them to do so once in their life time. It is not mandatory for those who have neither the ability nor the resources to undertake this pilgrimage.

To perform Hajj, one has to leave one's home and travel to Hijaz in Saudi Arabia. The pilgrim then goes to Makkah and does the circumambulation of the Kabah. After that, he runs between two hillocks, called Safa and Marwa. He next stops at Arafat, where he casts stones at Jamrat. He then sacrifices an animal. In this way, different rituals of worship are performed in the month of Zul Hijja. All of this is what constitutes Hajj.

This Hajj is a symbolic form of surrendering oneself to one's Lord. Through these acts of worship the pilgrim pledges to surrender himself before God, so that his life revolves around God alone, and to signal that he is ready to perform all kinds of sacrifice for the sake of God.

During Hajj, the worshipper remembers the two pious men who built the Kabah, Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Ismail. He sees the historical places associated with the Prophet Muhammad. He spends some of his time in this environment where the history of Islam initially took shape.

In this way, Hajj becomes a means of bringing a person closer to God and his prophets. It reminds one of the lives of people who were reputed for their virtue, thus creating a living relationship with the history of Islam.

Hajj, moreover unites God-worshippers from all over the world. It refreshes the reality in the mind of the believers that however much their races and nationalities may be different, they all believe in the same God and in the same Prophet: this is a great source of unity. They might be living in different lands but being worshippers of God, they are all as one. Hajj is basically a form of worship of God, but practically there are many other benefits associated with it. One of these is fostering of unity in all the believers.

## THE SIMPLE PRINCIPLE OF MORALITY

The simple principle of morality in Islam is: 'you should want for others what you want for yourself. You should like for others what you would like for yourself.'

**T**he way one person behaves with another in daily life must be governed by a set of moral principles, commonly referred to as ethics.

What should be the first principle of morality? This principle is simply that – you should want for others what you want for yourself. You should like for others what you would like for yourself.

Everyone knows that he likes to hear good words. So everyone ought to use good words, kind words when they speak to others. No one wants to have any problems created for him, therefore everyone should avoid creating problems for others.

Everyone wants to be dealt with sympathetically and cooperatively. Therefore everyone ought to behave in that way with others, that is, deal with them sympathetically, and with full cooperation.

This ethical criterion is quite simple and natural. It is so simple that everyone can understand it, whether

he be educated or illiterate, whether he be blind or handicapped, and regardless of his likes and dislikes. The traditions of the Prophet have laid down a moral yardstick which no one will find difficult to understand. In this way, Islam, in terms of personal experience, has made it clear to everyone what their behaviour with others should be and how they should deal with others, and also how not to behave with others.

The Prophet once said that the best of people are those whose morals are the best. Accordingly, becoming a good human being has nothing mysterious about it. There is a simple formula for this and that is, a person should save himself from having double standards. In doing so, he will set an example of superior human morality.

## SABR (PATIENCE)

### **The Superior Solution**

Patience is a superior solution to the problems faced by the individual. It also contributes to building a heavenly personality.

**P**atience is a great virtue without which a person's aim to lead his life in this world with high ideals

can seldom be achieved. The reality is that at every step an individual is faced with experiences so unpleasant and so provoking that they divert him from his true purpose in life – to the point of making him lose sight of his ideals.

This being so, if he allows himself to be provoked at every turn and becomes embroiled in every unpleasant issue, he will cease to be able to surmount the hurdles in his onward journey. He will just keep frittering away his time and energy in irrelevant matters.

The sole solution to this problem is the exercise of patience. Patience is that prolonged self-control which enables the individual to tread the path of restraint when he has bitter experiences, instead of allowing himself to be provoked into vengeful or retaliatory behaviour. It makes it easier for him to face life's vicissitudes with equanimity and forge ahead on the path of truth.

The exercise of patience, on the one hand, is a solution to the problems faced by the individual. On the other hand, it is a major aid in the building of a superior personality. Those without patience fall a prey to negative influences, while those who are patient develop positive personalities.

It should be emphasized that patience means neither retreat nor capitulation. It means rather curbing turbulent emotions in order to follow a course marked by sanity and wisdom. Being patient and using one's brain makes it easier to determine which is the most beneficial course of action to follow.

## SPEAKING THE TRUTH

Truth is the character of nature which is extant at a universal level. A believer, too must be free from falsehood and double standards and be completely truthful.

**T**he believer is a truthful person. He always speaks the truth. In all matters he says what is exactly in accordance with the facts. A believer cannot afford not to express what is the truth. He cannot tell a lie. What does speaking the truth mean? Speaking the truth means that there is no contradiction between a person's knowledge and his words. Whatever he knows he should say and whatever he says should be in accordance with his knowledge. On the contrary, falsehood is the utterance of things which are at variance with true knowledge.

Truthfulness is the most noble aspect of a believer's character. A believer is a man of principle, and for a man of principle, there is no conduct more proper than speaking the truth at all times. Speaking against the truth is not possible for a true believer, regardless of the circumstances.

The entire world of God is based on truth. Here everything manifests itself in its real form: the sun, the moon, the rivers, the mountains, the trees, the stars, the planets - all stand on truth. They are what they are in reality. They show themselves to be so. In this vast world of God, nothing stands on falsehood. There is nothing which pretends to be anything other than what it actually is.

This is the character of nature which is extant at universal level. A believer too has to have exactly the same character. He must be totally free from falsehood and double standards. A believer is truth all in all. His total existence is moulded on the truth. Just by looking at him, one feels that he is a truthful human being, both inside and outside.

Speaking the truth is not just a matter of policy for a believer. It is rather his religion. Therefore, compromising on the truth is not possible for him.

He speaks the truth, because without doing so he cannot live. He speaks the truth because he knows that refraining from speaking the truth is a negation of himself and anything which is negation of oneself, it is totally untenable.

## FULFILLING PROMISES

Fulfilling a promise is a deed of a noble ethical quality and faith encourages this most sublime virtue. Fulfilling promise is a sign of possessing a predictable character.

**I**n social life while dealing with others it happens repeatedly that one person makes a promise to someone else. Such a promise is apparently between two individuals or two groups. But there is the third party, and that is God, who is necessarily present as a witness. This being so, every promise becomes a divine commitment.

That is why a believer becomes extremely sensitive regarding promises. He is convinced of the fact that every promise made by one to another is under the eyes of God, and that one who makes a promise will be accountable to God. This conviction compels him to be extremely

responsible with regard to promises. Whenever he makes a promise, he should certainly fulfil it.

In a society where people are of such a character that they fulfil their promises, every individual becomes predictable in character. In such a society that special quality prevails on a vast scale. Throughout the rest of the universe, every celestial body functions with 100% accuracy. For instance, one can know in advance about the rotation of the stars and planets and as to where they would be after the next hundred or thousand years. Similarly, in regard to water we know in advance at what degree it will come to boiling point. In this way, the whole universe has become of a predictable character.

In a society where people fulfil their promises, many other virtues flourish. For instance, in such a society people do not quarrel in their dealings, and there is an atmosphere of trust in one another. In such a society, all live in a peaceful state because they have no fear that others will break their promises in their dealings with them.

Fulfilling a promise is a deed of a noble ethical quality and faith encourages this most sublime virtue.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF CLEANLINESS

Cleanliness for a believer is a form of worship. The faith of a believer is a guarantee that when he is physically clean, he is also able to purify his soul.

A believer attaches great importance to cleanliness. First of all, belief or faith makes his soul pure. Consequently, his appearance also becomes clean. His thinking based on faith makes him a lover of cleanliness. A believer daily washes his hands, feet and face five times a day to say his prayers. Daily, he takes bath at least once to cleanse the whole body. His dress, although simple, is always washed clean.

He loves cleanliness and always tries to keep his house clean. Therefore, he cleans his house daily, keeps things in order, and rids his house of anything which could give off a bad smell. All these things become a part and parcel of his daily lifestyle. A believer is not happy unless everything is kept clean.

This desire for cleanliness is not limited to just one's body and one's home, but extends to one's entire neighbourhood. The believer wants the whole environment to be clean where he resides. He takes

extra care that he and his family members should not dirty the environment around their home. This is the training that he gives to others. He does not rest content until he is able to have clean surroundings in his neighbourhood.

Cleanliness is just cleanliness for a person. But for a believer, cleanliness is a form of worship, because he knows that God loves people to be clean.

Furthermore, the faith of a believer is a guarantee that when he is able to be clean physically, he is also able to purify his soul. As such when he is purifying himself, he prays, “O God, clean not just my body but also my soul.” Such a prayer becomes a means of purifying the soul.

## TOLERANCE LEADS TO RESPECTING DIFFERENCES

In social life one is faced with differences in religion, culture, personal preferences, etc. Tolerance means respecting others and giving concessions to them.

**T**olerance is a great human and Islamic quality. Tolerance means making concessions to others.

Whereas a lack of tolerance shows that a person only considers himself. He is unaware of the demands of others. Tolerance is a noble virtue. It has been variously referred to in Islam, for instance, gentleness, softening of the heart, and being kind to all creatures.

When an individual attains to true worship and true religiosity, he rises above all the evils which stem from selfishness. He begins to be aware of external realities rather than just his own self. Such a person starts seeing others with eyes of love; this becomes second nature to him. He does not expect anything from others. Therefore, if others are not good to him, even then he keeps up his tolerant attitude towards them.

Tolerance enables a person in all situations to respect others, whether they are good to him or not. In all situations he should live amongst them with the best human values, whether they are friends or relatives or unrelated to him. In all situations, he should treat people with sympathy and well-wishing, even if they are unsympathetic in their attitude.

Tolerance in actual fact means being conciliatory towards others. In social life one is unavoidably faced with differences in religion, culture, tradition, personal preferences, and so on. In such a situation,

the best course is to tread the path of concession and broad-mindedness while adhering to one's principles. In his personal matters a person should be a man of principle, but when it comes to others, he should be ready to adjust. He subjects himself to self-criticism but with others, he is lenient, kind and broad minded. It is the aim of Islam to produce such a high standard of character in the believers.

## JIHAD IN ISLAM

Jihad means peaceful struggle, which is sometimes inward-looking like waging jihad with the self at the level of feelings; and sometimes externally.

Jihad means struggle. Any sincere effort for the cause of religion will be called Jihad. Man's self leads him to evil. So waging war with the self is jihad. Sometimes friends or acquaintances pressurize you into engaging in activities, which are not right from the moral standpoint. At that time, refusing to yield such pressure and sticking firmly to an upright attitude are forms of jihad.

Exhorting people to goodness and making them refrain from indecency are tasks entailing a great struggle.

Continuing the dawah campaign whilst bearing all hardship is also jihad.

If having been treated with bitterness by neighbors or acquaintances, or after suffering any other kind of provocation, one refrains from reaction and retaliation and maintains pleasant relations unilaterally; this will also be a form of jihad.

There is another kind of jihad which is called 'qital' that is, engaging in war at God's behest at the time of aggression on the part of the enemies. This jihad is purely in self-defense in order to counter aggression. The literal meaning of jihad is not war. But to fight in self-defense in accordance with God's commandments also involves a struggle; that is why it is also called jihad.

Jihad, meaning war, is however a temporary and circumstantial matter. If in the real sense any need for defense arises only then will armed jihad be launched. If no such severe urgency arises, no armed jihad will take place.

Just calling an action 'jihad' will not morally validate it. The only true jihad is that which is carried out in accordance with Islam. Islamic jihad is, in actual fact, another name for peaceful struggle. This peaceful

struggle is sometimes an inward-looking thing, like waging jihad with the self when it takes place at the level of feeling; sometimes it is desired externally, and manifests itself at the physical level through gestures (like kneeling, prostrating oneself before God).

## AVOIDANCE OF CLASH

Avoiding conflict in all situations of provocation and remaining united, even in spite of differences, is an important teaching of Islam and a sign of excellent character.

Avoidance of friction is one of the important principles of Islam. That is, avoiding confrontation in the face of complaints and differences of opinion, refraining from reaction and maintaining a positive attitude when provoked.

Every man and woman differs in temperament. There are many differences between people which repeatedly give rise to unpleasant experiences. In social life, whether at home or outside home, facing such unpleasant circumstances or situations is totally natural. No one can prevent such situations from arising.

Now there is one method of proceeding on all such occasions of differences, and that is to directly confront those responsible for the unpleasantness in order to solve the problem. But such an attempt can only be infructuous. It only aggravates the problem. It is not going to solve it.

On such occasions, Islam teaches us avoidance of friction. That is, in all such irksome situations one should try to tolerate unpleasantness instead of putting an end to it. Avoiding conflict in all such situations of provocation and remaining united, even in spite of differences, is the teaching of Islam.

According to Islam, this is not only a social issue but is also a special case for reward. Living amicably with people is an act worthy of reward even in normal situations, but in the face of complaints and unpleasantness, maintaining friendly relations, curbing feelings of irritation and generally displaying a positive attitude attracts a far greater reward. In the eyes of God, people who show such restraint will be reckoned as being the righteous (16:128). The righteous are those who have given proof of living in the world at an elevated ethical level and at a superior level of humanity.

Without avoidance of friction, it is not possible to attain excellence in human character.

## AT THE TIME OF DIFFERENCES

What is evil is man not dealing with differences in an appropriate way. Differences are not evil. Going in fear of God despite there being differences is a great Islamic act.

Differences are part of life. Differences continually arise among people, be they religiously inclined or not. Their inevitability has to be accepted. They can seldom be glossed over or summarily eradicated. Nevertheless, right-minded individuals are capable of adopting the correct attitude to them, however intractable they may seem.

A true believer is one who does not make an issue of differences. He does not take them as necessarily ill-intentioned. Moreover, differences should be limited to the sphere in which they have arisen. And treating others as being wrong on every count or as having double standards, or being ill intentioned, or insincere is a totally un-Islamic course to take.

Breaking off a relationship because of differences is not right. In such cases, serious discussion should take place and mutual relationships should be kept up.

In the present world everything exists or happens so that one may be put to the test. Differences are also meant for the purpose of testing an individual. One ought to be extremely prudent on the occasion of differences. One should continually strive to avoid any reaction which would not be approved of by God.

Adhering to justice whenever differences occur is without doubt a difficult proposition. But the reward for this is very great. In Islam every good deed is a form of worship. It is a form of worship when a person faced with differences and conflict prevents himself from being consumed by feelings of enmity and revenge. Only by doing so is he able to adhere to the way of justice, even when differences seem overwhelming.

Differences are no evil. What is evil is a person not dealing with differences in an appropriate way, such as would ensure his passing the divine test. Going in fear of God despite there being differences is a great Islamic act. Not going in fear of God at the time of differences is grievously un-Islamic.

## A GOOD NEIGHBOUR IS A GOOD HUMAN BEING

A believer must unilaterally make concessions to his neighbours. Ignoring any unpleasant behaviour, he must return good for evil.

**A**n individual's most immediate human contact—after family members—is his neighbours. These neighbours might just remain acquaintances, but the whole scenario is better if they become companions. It should be borne in mind that keeping the neighbours happy and establishing good relations with them are important aspects of a God-oriented life.

Whether a neighbour belongs to one's own religion or some other religion, whether he belongs to one's own nation or some other nation, in every way, he is to be respected. In all circumstances, he must be given his dues as is the demand of both religion and humanity.

According to a hadith, the Prophet of Islam once observed: “By God he is not a believer, by God he is not a believer, by God he is not a believer from whose evils his neighbour is not in peace.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, 6016) According to this hadith, if a Muslim harms his neighbour, or even if he lives in such a way

that his neighbours are not happy with him, then such a person's faith in Islam will become suspect.

For any person the first criterion for his humanity and his religiosity derives from how his neighbour regards him. From his behaviour with his neighbours, it is possible to tell whether or not he possesses human feelings, or whether or not he is sensitive to Islamic commandments.

If a person's neighbour is happy with him, it is a proof that he lives up to the standards of religion and humanity. And if his neighbour is not happy with him, it will be a proof that he falls below this standard.

According to Islam, a believer must unilaterally make concessions to his neighbours. He should ignore any unpleasant behaviour on the part of the neighbour and try to return good behaviour for his unpleasant behaviour. He must return good for evil.

Becoming a good neighbour is the proof of being a good human being. Those who behave in this way will share in the mercy and blessings of God in this world as well as the next world.

## A BELIEVER'S DUTIES TOWARD HUMANITY

Respecting and fulfilling the rights of his fellow men is the duty of a believer. The fulfilment of these duties makes him deserving of God's succour.

**T**he prime duty of a believer is that which he owes to God. This duty to God (called *huququllah*) entails accepting God with all His perfect attributes, worshipping Him, holding himself in readiness to serve Him and willingly accepting that whatever God demands of him, he will immediately and wholeheartedly carry out.

Another duty of a believer (called *huququl ibaad*) is respecting the rights of his fellow men. This is the duty that he owes to humanity. All men and women who are relatives, neighbours or compatriots or partners in dealings, have certain rights over a believer. Respecting those rights is incumbent on the believer. Without doing so, he cannot be held deserving of God's succour.

What are the rights of mankind? Wherever a believer comes in contact with other human beings, he should behave as Islam demands. He should not deal with them in ways that do not measure up to Islamic criteria.

For instance, the believer must respect others, never dishonour them, and he should do things which are to their benefit. If it is not possible to benefit others, then at least he must save them from any harm. He must always fulfil promises and never try to usurp others' wealth and property. He must always deal justly with others. He must never accept anything bad said about others without having evidence to support what is said. When giving advice, it must be as a well-wisher. He must never give insincere advice to anyone.

Everyone should fulfil the obligations he has to others. This is called fulfilling one's right over humankind.

## SERVING HUMANITY

The service of mankind is the service of humanity. After submission to and worship of God, there is no work greater than that of serving people.

One of the noble qualities of a believer is his desire to serve people, that is, serving God's creatures, and fulfilling their needs without the hope of any return.

Helping others is, in fact, an acknowledgement of the divine blessings received by him. Only that person

helps others who has more blessings than others, for instance, one who has vision helps those who are blind, a healthy person comes to the assistance of a handicapped person, a wealthy person aids a poor man, or a person who has power or position helps out someone who has no such resources.

On all such occasions, when a person helps someone because of the gifts God has given him, he acknowledges the blessings of God. It is like his saying, "O God whatever I have has been given by You. Now I am again spending it in Your cause."

By doing social service, by coming to the assistance of others, a person does not just help others but rather elevates his own position, because using the gifts he has received from God only for himself is being selfish.

A selfless person is one who does not live inside the cocoon of his own self but aims to reach out to the whole of humanity. He feels he must lead his life in this world as the well-wisher of all. He should be ever ready to help others. He should accept the rights others have over his wealth.

The service of mankind is in other words, the service of humanity and after the worship of God, there is no work greater than that of serving people.

## ISLAM AND HUMAN EQUALITY

In Islam all greatness is reserved for God alone. All human beings are equally God's creation. In this way, there is no difference between one man and other.

**I**n Islam all human beings are equal. The Prophet of Islam, on the occasion of the Final Pilgrimage, declared that no Arab had superiority over a non-Arab. No white man had superiority over a black man. Superiority derives only from being God-fearing rather than from race or colour.

Among human beings there are many differences to be found. But these differences are only for the purpose of recognition rather than to indicate superiority. To build a system of social and national life, it is necessary for people to have such features as make them recognisable to one another. To meet this social need, God has created apparent differences from various respects between people, so that the smooth functioning of the system of the world and dealings with one another may be facilitated. But, so far as a human being's true superiority is concerned, it is all wholly based on his inherent qualities. That is why there is a hadith which says that God sees people's hearts, He does not see their bodies. Physical

differences may affect human affairs, but in the Hereafter, only those will be rewarded who are held to be deserving because of their inner qualities.

In Islam human equality is regarded as of utmost important. At prayers, all believers stand in rows with one another. During Hajj, all Muslims, from all countries wear the same attire to perform the pilgrimage. In Islam everyone has the same position as all others, neither less nor more. By Islamic light, all kinds of greatness are reserved for God alone. In spite of apparent differences between people, all are equally God's creation. There is certainly a difference between God and human beings, but there is no difference between one human being and another.

## HUMAN BROTHERHOOD

All human beings are equally God's creatures. They should live in unity and amity in society, just as they live in their own families.

According to Islam, all human beings have been created by the one God. As such, all human beings are of one brotherhood. Differentiating between one person and another is not approved of by God.

Humanity began with one human pair called Adam and Eve. Human beings, wherever they are or in whatever country, they all belong to the same race of Adam and Eve. The differences that are found in colour and language and in other cultural matters, are due to geographical factors. So far as origin is concerned, all human beings are the progeny of Adam and Eve and have now settled all over the world.

The teaching of Islam is that the differences in language, colour and features should not cause people to regard others as strangers. On the contrary, what should happen ideally, is that they should have good feelings and love for others. They should be of help to one another. All human beings in the vaster sense, should live in unity and amity just as they live in their own families.

The truth is that the relation between one human being and another is not that of strangeness, but of familiarity. It is not one of distance, but of closeness. It is not one of hatred but of love.

When all human beings have the same mother and father, it means that all human beings are equal. Here neither is anyone small nor is anyone great. The difference between great and small is not between

one person and another but between an individual and God. So far as human beings are concerned, all have the same position as all others but as compared to God, there is no human being greater than Him. All human beings are equally God's creatures. God looks upon everyone with the same eye. He does not differentiate between his creatures.

## GOD-ORIENTED LIFE

A believer keeps to the path of God. Living in higher realities, he settles life's issues thinking not of temporary gains, but of accountability to God and the Hereafter.

The aim of Islam is to develop in individuals the ability to lead a life of God-worship in this world, and an abhorrence of the ungodly life. Life is ungodly when a person's interests are focused on something other than God; all his attention is given to the creations of God and not to the Creator. The thinking, and the emotions of the true believer are centred wholly on the Being of the one God. When a person opts for a path to reach a certain destination, he has to keep to this path without turning right or

left, because if he did so, he would never reach his destination. The same holds true for anyone who wants to find God.

In the present world, when a person wants to begin his life, he finds many paths to take. There is a single path which leads to God, while there are many other paths which divert him and lead him to another destination. The true seeker of God keeps sedulously to the path of God. He takes extra care not to turn to the right or left. If he keeps to the right path leading towards God, he will certainly reach God. On the contrary, one who turns to the right or left will lose his way, and will never be able to reach God.

Wavering from one path to another means that a person becomes subservient to his desires. He attaches importance to worldly interests. He becomes a prey to such feelings as anger, hatred, jealousy and egoism. He recklessly takes any path which he finds before him.

On the contrary, the path leading to God opens up only to one who thinks deeply on the higher realities; who prudently sets his course by serious decisions. He is one who settles the issues of his life on the basis of accountability in the Hereafter rather than on the basis of mere temporary gains or whimsical motivations.

## PRAYER

### Expression of Heartfelt Attachment to God

Prayer, calling upon God, is an unceasing activity. It is an expression of one's unending and heartfelt attachment to God at all times.

**P**rayer means calling upon God. This means that God's servant calls to Him asking for something for his needs, or to express his willingness to serve Him. This call in itself is a form of worship.

God is a living and eternal existence. He hears, He sees, He has the power to do what He wants and sets the course of events in whatever direction He wants.

It is this conviction about God which arouses this feeling within a person that he should call upon Him. When a person achieves God realization, he naturally has an urge to call upon God to meet his needs. He should call upon God for the blessings of this world and the Hereafter. He should acknowledge God as his Sustainer and Provider.

There is no time or method set for prayer nor does it require a separate language. At all times, an individual can call upon God in any form and in any language. If calling upon God has come from a sincere heart, this

prayer will instantly reach God. God will hear it and accordingly will decide upon its acceptance.

There are certain prayers which are repeated in different forms of ritual worship. But most prayers are those which are not linked with any particular activity. For instance, when a person goes to bed at night, some words of prayer come to his lips. Similarly, when he gets up in the morning, he begins to pray for a better beginning for the new day. The same thing happens when he meets someone or eats or drinks something or boards some conveyance to go on a journey, or during his business dealings. Or even in any other situation, in relation to it some words of prayer are uttered by him, for example, 'O God, in this matter grant me something better.' This action of prayer in a believer's life occurs continually in different forms.

Prayer means calling upon God. And calling upon God is an unceasing activity. It goes on in all situations. Prayer is an expression of one's unending and heartfelt attachment to God. The life of a believer is not at any time free from prayer.

## PRAYERS REFRESH THE FAITH OF THE BELIEVER

Prayers come to the lips of a believer on all occasions. They continually refresh the faith of a believer, until finally he leaves this world to meet his Maker.

Islam has given us a number of prayers amongst its other teachings. Many of these prayers have been recorded in the books of Hadith. These prayers tell us what kind of words of invocation should fall from the lips of the believers on different occasions. For instance, when someone meets another person he should greet him by saying, 'Peace be upon you' (*Assalamualaykum*). Similarly, when a believer is about to eat food, he should begin by saying, 'In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful,' and when he finishes his food he should say *Alhamdulillah* (Praise be to God). He should utter the words appropriate to each occasion.

This means that the believer begins his eating and drinking in the name of God and ends his eating and drinking in the name of God. It is his way of thanking God and acknowledging His blessings.

When some evil idea creeps in a believer's mind, he

seeks refuge in God by saying, *Allahumma inni aa'uzubika minash shaitan nir rajim*, 'I seek refuge in God from Satan, the accursed.' (*Musnad Ahmad*, 16740) When he is faced with some problem, he spontaneously says, *Allah humma alaika tawakkalna*, 'O God, in You we have placed our trust.' (60:4) In a similar way, when he receives some wealth, he says, *Allah humma barik lana fi amwalina*, that is, 'O God, bless us in our wealth.' (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, 1037). When a believer undertakes some journey, he has these words on his lips: 'O God, You are my Companion during the journey and the Guardian of my family.' (*Sahih Muslim*, 1342)

When he hears of someone's death he says, *Inna lillahi wa inna ilaihi rajiun*, 'We belong to God and to Him we shall return.' (2:156) In this way, at every juncture of life and at every stage, Islam gives us some prayer to say. These prayers are meant to refresh the faith of the believer. This transforms every happening in this present world into a godly experience. In this way, a believer leads his life in God's remembrance and prayer, until finally he leaves this world to meet his Maker.

## MORNINGS AND EVENINGS IN THE LIFE OF A BELIEVER

While performing his daily activities, a believer continues to remember God, seek God's blessings, introspect and remain within the bounds set by God.

Islam gives a complete plan for living, covering the entire life of the believer. From morning till evening, no moment of life lies beyond the sphere of Islam. A believer gets up early in morning after a night's sleep. First of all, he purifies his body by performing his ablutions, then he says his dawn prayer. This is the beginning of the life of a believer which starts with purification and worship. Afterwards, throughout the day until noon, he conducts his business affairs. But during this activity, a believer keeps remembering God in all matters, remaining within the boundaries set by God. In his dealings, he is totally honest, and in his meetings with people, he fully adheres to moral principles.

Then comes the time for the second prayer, which is said at noon. This is called the Zuhr Prayer. In this, he renews his relationship with God. He purifies his body and soul and then is again involved in the struggle of life. Always a person of principle, he remains engaged in his activities until the time comes for the third

prayer, called the Asr Prayer. Once again he goes to pray and seeks God's blessings.

In this way, a believer's time keeps passing until sunset when it is time for fourth prayer, called the Maghrib Prayer. Again the believer leaves his work to say his prayers, according to the method laid down for him, drawing religious and spiritual sustenance from them. After this prayer he again goes to attend to the demands of daily life with a religious mind, until the time comes for the fifth prayer called the Isha Prayer. After offering the Isha Prayer, the believer introspects about his whole day's activities before going to bed so that the next morning, when he gets up, he is able to start his work in a better mental state.

## TAWASSUM

### **Spiritual Nourishment From Everyday Events**

Just as material food is necessary for the health of the body, so also is learning lessons from all events a form of spiritual nourishment for a believer.

**A** true believer has the aptitude to learn lessons from everything going on around him. Faith makes a person sensitive. In all matters he tries to

go beyond mere appearances in order to plumb the depths of things, thus arriving at their true meaning. Things which people see and fail to take seriously yield up a treasure of wisdom to the believer. His insight is so developed that he is able to see beyond superficialities to the deeper level of things.

The believer has sublime qualities which make his personality multi-dimensional. At every moment he discovers new things. The scattered universe becomes a great source of provision for his soul.

In the rays of the sun, he can see the light of God. In a breath of fresh air, he experiences the divine touch. In the verdure of the world with its trees and colourful flowers, he has glimpses of a world of meaning. He can see a more profound meaning in every spring and a more meaningful autumn in every autumn.

In this way, all human and non-human events become a source of taking lesson for him. He increases his knowledge from the knowledge of others. Others' mistakes become a cause of improvement of his own mistakes. Right from the ants to the camels and from the rivers to the mountains, in everything he finds some aspect which adds to his insight. All of these

become the sources of new experiences, giving his personality a many-sidedness.

Just as material food is necessary for the health of the body, so also is learning lessons from all events a form of spiritual nourishment for a human being. If material food guarantees physical well-being so also is the learning of lessons a guarantee of spiritual health.

## HOW SHOULD ONE LIVE IN THE FAMILY?

Every member of the family should focus on their duty rather than on their rights. When a problem occurs, everyone should strive to nip it in the bud, rather than let it escalate.

A tradition of the Prophet has it that, “The best of you is one who is the best for his family.” (*Sunan Ibn Majah*, 1977) This holds true for every member of the family, whether man or woman, senior or junior. Everyone has to give proof of being a better man or a better woman within the family. Everyone has to become a worthy member of his or her family.

What is the family home? The home is the primary unit of social life. Many homes together build a society. If

the environment at home is good then the society will also be good. And if the environment at home goes awry, then the environment of the society will also certainly go wrong. Another name for a group of good homes is a good society. On the contrary, a group of bad homes makes for a bad society.

The first criterion of a good individual is his conduct at home. If a person is good and very friendly outside his home but in his home is unbending and inconsiderate in his attitude, he cannot be deemed a good person, because the real criterion of humanity is a person's behaviour at home rather than his behaviour outside the home.

How should one live in the family? The elders must take care of the younger family members and the younger family members must give proper respect to the elders. The men should be kind and gentle with their womenfolk at home. And the womenfolk should be considerate of the men. All the occupants of the home must have their eyes set on duty rather than on their rights. Every member should take his share in household duties and should also help with others responsibilities. Whenever there is any problem at home, everyone should strive to nip it in the bud rather than let it escalate.

The secret of successful family life is the willingness to be of service and compatibility. Every member of the family should be wholehearted in serving others and whenever differences and complaints arise, they should be ready to sink their difference and live harmoniously.

## BEAUTY IN SIMPLICITY

Living in a state of servitude to God, one inevitably becomes drawn to simplicity. Then, one devotes oneself totally to the achievement of higher purposes in life.

A believer is one who has found God. One who has found God naturally starts appreciating sublime realities. He rises above appearances and takes a keen interest in the world of meaning. Such a person as a matter of temperament becomes one who loves simplicity. He believes in “simple living and high thinking.”

Those who acquire a taste for what is real, lose interest in external, material things. Such people start relishing simplicity. Material things lose their attraction for them. Their souls derive peace from the things of nature. Unnatural or artificial things have no

appeal for them. They feel that they are obstacle to their spiritual journey.

Simplicity is a believer's strength. It is a support to him. By embracing simplicity, a believer is able to save himself from wasting his time in irrelevant things. He saves himself from being embroiled in unnecessary matters. And in this way, he is able to devote himself totally to the achievement of higher purposes.

Simplicity is a believer's food. Simplicity becomes an adornment of his modesty. In an atmosphere of simplicity, his personality is better nourished. Simplicity is a believer's beauty. For a believer simplicity is life. If a believer ever finds himself in a world of artificial attractions, he feels as if he is shut up in some prison.

A believer regards himself as God's servant in the most absolute sense. This enables him to live tranquilly in his state of servitude. The temperament of one who willingly lives in his state of servitude will inevitably become drawn to simplicity, because any other style of living which is not marked by simplicity will be at variance with his character and he will not be able to countenance such a situation.

## DIVINE WAY MOVE WITHIN YOUR SPHERE

The believer leads his life in the sphere fixed for him by God. Staying within their limits makes them deserving of God's mercy in this world and the Hereafter.

There are innumerable planets and stars in the universe. All these are constantly rotating in the vastness of space. Space is an infinite field for the movement of innumerable celestial bodies but it is astonishing that no collision ever takes place between them.

What is the secret of this? It is that every star and every planet moves in its orbit with the utmost precision. It never deviates from its celestial course. It is this law of movement which definitely stops the stars and planets from colliding.

A human being is required to follow exactly the same course. God has provided a fixed sphere, for the functioning or activities of all human beings. Every person has to move within the boundaries of his sphere. When all human beings move in their own spheres, a state of peace is established in society. But when people do not stay within their limits then

conflict will certainly begin in society. People will start to clash with one another, in which case they will destroy themselves as well as others.

How should a person lead his life in society? How should he deal with others? What course should he adopt in his words and deeds? For all these issues, God has given clear guidance. He has laid down some eternal principles. Those who conduct themselves just as God desires are, as if, rotating in their fixed spheres. On the contrary, those, who do what has been forbidden by God are, as if, digressing from their fixed sphere; such are those people who produce all kinds of evil in society. Not only do they destroy themselves but they also bring about the ruination of society.

The true believer is one who leads his life in the sphere fixed for him by God. It is individuals such as him who will receive God's mercy in this world and in the next eternal world will have eternal blessings heaped upon them.

## THE PURPOSE OF WEALTH

Wealth is a means of putting man to the test. The proper use of wealth leads him to progress, while its wrong use leads him to destruction.

Where wealth is a need in life, it cannot be the aim of life. If wealth is earned so that life's needs may be fulfilled, it is a person's best supporter. But if the acquisition of wealth is set up as the aim of life and the making of more and more money comes to be regarded as a great achievement, then the possession of wealth becomes a misfortune which will destroy a person in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

Every human being has to live in this world for a specified period of time. This being so, a person needs the wherewithal to sustain himself in this world. There has to be considerable expenditure on resources and as such it is necessary for everyone to earn money. In this context, money or wealth is a valuable support for everyone.

But another facet of human life requires one to gain knowledge. One has to make efforts towards spiritual progress. One has to play a positive part in

the development of humanity. One has to develop his personality in such a way that he may become a beneficial member of society.

This is the actual aim or purpose of life. The achievement of this purpose is possible only when a person devotes a considerable amount of energy to it. There should be a limit to the amount of time and energy spent on earning money so that other, more worthy activities may not be neglected.

Wealth fulfils the material or physical needs of a person. But wealth does not suffice to fulfil his spiritual and intellectual needs. One who makes the acquisition of money the be all and end all of life will nourish his body but starve his soul. His intellectual life will be so deprived that it will almost cease as to exist.

According to Islam, wealth is a means of putting a person to the test. The proper use of wealth leads him to all kinds of progress, while the wrong use of wealth leads him into the pit of destruction.

## LOSS AND GAIN

In this world, both losing and gaining are tests. Neither is a loser a failure nor is a gainer victorious. Successful is one who maintains his composure in both situations.

**I**n this world a person is sometimes the loser and sometimes the gainer. Loss and gain are two experiences everyone undergoes at one time or another. No one is exempt.

Now the question arises: what does one make of such experiences? Islam tells us that both kinds of experience are meant as tests. Here gaining in itself does not mean success. Similarly, losing does not mean that one has become a total failure.

The actual importance in the matter of losing and gaining does not lie in loss or gain. What is crucial is the kind of response one gives whilst undergoing these experiences.

In the case of losing, a person should not regard himself as deprived and a failure: he should not lose all hope and fall to lamenting and complaining. On the contrary, he must prove himself capable of rising above the experience by taking everything in his

stride. He should bear all forms of adversity patiently and maintain his balance. He should think that just as the giver is God so also is the taker God. This being so, he has to willingly accept His decision, because it is only in doing so that he can again be deserving of God's mercy and succour.

Conversely, when he is the gainer, he should not become proud and consider himself superior to everyone else. On the contrary, he should ensure that success only adds to his modesty. In relation to God and humanity, whatever responsibilities devolve upon him should be shouldered by him in a far superior way. In this world, losing and gaining are both tests. Neither is a loser a failure nor is a gainer victorious. The true sign of success or failure is how the individual copes with these experiences.

The successful one is he who, after experiencing loss or gain, maintains his composure. None of these experiences cause him to deviate from the path of moderation. It is people of such staunchness who will be held successful in the eyes of God. Nothing will come in the way of their success.

## CONCEPT OF SALVATION

Salvation in the Hereafter is for those who have made themselves deserving of salvation in the life before death by their righteous actions.

What is the greatest issue that should concern a person? It is to attain to salvation in the life to come after death and to have a share in God's mercy for all eternity.

Everyone who is born into this present world has to enter into another world after death. In the present world, a person has all kinds of opportunities to shine while being tested. In the next world, what he will receive will be by way of rewards for his actions. In the world before death he received everything, whether or not he deserved it. But in the world after death, this will no longer be the case. He will receive nothing without having deserved it. At that time, the sole criterion for receiving anything will be merit.

In the next world, only those who are held to be deserving will be showered with blessings of all kinds, whereas those who are lacking in merit, will have nothing.

This is every human being's greatest problem. Everyone ought to focus totally on not being held undeserving in the next life so that he may not be one of those who fail to achieve salvation. Everyone must devote the utmost effort and give his full attention to how he conducts himself in this present world, so that he may not be held to be lacking in merit in the next stage of life, but rather be the worthy recipient of blessings and salvation.

The next world is a perfect and eternal world, in which there will be all kinds of pleasure and happiness. It is this world to which a person should aspire and it is this world for which he should expend all his energy. It is for this world, full of blessing, that an individual should prove his mettle before rather than after death. The world of today is the world of action: the next world is a world of reaping the rewards for one's actions.

Salvation in the Hereafter is for those who have made themselves deserving of salvation in the life before death.

## CONCLUSION

Understanding the creation plan of God and living a principled life is the lifestyle which is called Islam.

“Islam” is an Arabic word which means “submission, surrender and obedience to God.” In religious terms, this means that the individual who embraces Islam as his religion must put the Almighty first and foremost in his life, bowing to His wishes in all matters great and small.

Everything in the universe—the sun, the moon, the stars—have all completely subjugated themselves to His will; they cannot make the slightest deviation from the path He has ordained for them. Similarly, all other elements in nature function in obedience to the laws of nature laid down for them by their Maker. The universe, therefore, literally follows the religion of Islam in that it has surrendered to God, the Lord of the Universe.

But there is a difference between the status of man and that of the physical world. The physical world has been given no option but to submit to God, whereas man has been given free will, so that he may opt for either good or bad ways. To this end he has been

given a thinking faculty, and a conscience with which to make moral judgements for himself. He has the ability to accept and reject in order to follow certain principles in life. He is not bound by fixed laws like all other created beings. He has been given freedom of thought, option and action.

It is through this liberty of choice that man is being tested. But after being given a thinking faculty, a conscience and an ability to judge between good and bad ways, he was not just left to his own resources. God did not just leave man in a world where there was no way to find the truth. Divine provision for him went much further than that. To see how God gave His guidelines to mankind, we have to go right back to the beginning of creation. He took Adam, the first man—whom He had made not just an ordinary mortal but also a prophet—and taught him everything that He wanted from man, so that human beings would not be left without proper direction or guidance. From time to time thereafter, He sent large numbers of prophets to the world—the last of these being the Prophet Muhammad—so that human beings, who tended to stray, could be recalled to the path of virtue.

What is the path of virtue? It is the path outlined as per the Creation Plan of God. The Creator of the

world has created this world, as one half of a pair—the present limited 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 thus created him as an eternal creature and has divided his life into two stages — the *pre-death period* or the limited life in this world and the *post death period* or the eternal 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. This is the scheme of existence for this world as devised by its Creator. The real aim of creation is to select those who are fit to inhabit the world of Paradise. Evil people will not be selected to inhabit Paradise.

The essence of God's Creation Plan is to test man in the pre-death period. If man proves himself to be eligible for entry in Paradise, God Almighty will select him to live in Paradise eternally. God has given each person complete freedom—not simply as a gift, but as a test. The result of this test would enable God to know who misused his freedom and who put his freedom to the best use. This was, and still 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.

When one understands the creation plan of God, he realizes that the purpose of creating a human being in this world is to give him the opportunity to be the most superior of the creatures so that he may be credited with being one of those special beings who bound himself to living a principled life, in spite of having no compulsion to do so. It is this very lifestyle which is called Islam.

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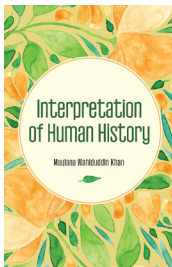
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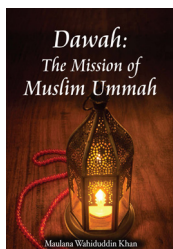


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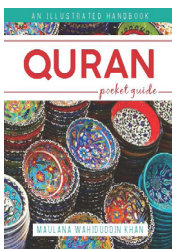
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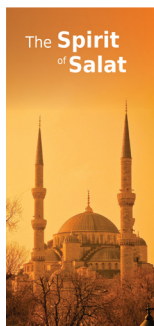


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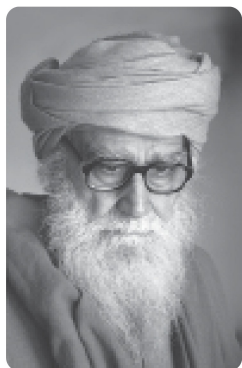
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Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021) was an Islamic scholar, spiritual leader and peace activist. His work has received international recognition for his seminal contributions toward world peace. The Maulana authored over 200 books dealing with Islam's 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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