



ISLAM AND HUMAN WELFARE

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN



A historic lecture by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan at
Srinagar's Tagore Hall, 1989

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Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

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FOREWORD

On the invitation of Anjuman Mazharul Haq, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan travelled to Jammu and Kashmir on June 29, 1989. During this visit, the Maulana delivered lectures at a number of places. The most important of these speeches was given at Tagore Hall, Kashmir's largest auditorium, on June 30, 1989. The present booklet is a translation of this speech in which the Maulana provides his reflections on many important subjects. Among them are the Islamic position on welfare of humanity, the historical role played by Islam that ushered in scientific progress, prophetic wisdom of patience and avoidance, the need of reassessment for present Muslims and their duty of living as giver members in this country.

Wahiduddin Khan

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SEPARATION OF RELIGION AND SCIENCE

It was for the first time in history that the Prophet Muhammad proposed the separation of science from religious belief.

In Srinagar many of my companions have initiated a series of activities for social welfare. One such endeavour is the setting up of a blood bank, which I have been invited to inaugurate. I pray to God to grant success to these philanthropic ventures, strengthen all those involved and bless their noble efforts.

When I was preparing to leave for Srinagar, I happened to meet a gentleman who enquired about the purpose of my travel. I told him that a blood donation camp was being organized and I had been requested to inaugurate it. This gentleman was rather conservative in his views. He asked me if it was at all lawful in Islam to give one's own blood to another person. I decided to not directly reply to him, however, I continued to ponder over the matter. I was astonished at the

degeneration of the present Muslim mindset. They seem to be busy engaged in trying to ascertain the permissibility or impermissibility of something that has already been decided long ago!

It must be borne in mind that Islam had taken a revolutionary step in the seventh century AD. During the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad an extremely significant event had taken place, which changed the course of entire history. All such questions as the above gentleman asked me are directly related to this incident from the Prophet's life. Since we are largely unaware of this important event, we are today beset by many unnecessary doubts.

This incident occurred after the Prophet's migration from Makkah to Madinah. It so happened that one day when he was on his way to some place, the Prophet noticed few men resting on the branches of the date palm tree and engrossed in something. The Prophet's hometown, Makkah, was a mountainous terrain unfavourable for plantation of trees such as the date palm. Makkan diet thus consisted mostly of meat and milk. On the other hand, since Madinah was suitable for agriculture, dates constituted the dominant part of the diet. When the Prophet saw the local men of Madinah using techniques such as pollination, he became curious and enquired, "What

are you all doing?” They replied, “We are transferring pollen from the male part to the female part of the plant.” This method is called *ta’bir nakhl* in Arabic and “pollination” in English.

It is well known that animals give birth to new offspring through reproduction. Plants also have processes for generating new plants, one among them being sexual reproduction. The male and female parts in plants produce reproductive cells which combine through a process called pollination. Pollination is the mechanism of transferring pollen grains from the anther – male part of a flower, to the stigma – female part of a flower. The resulting fertilization of the female part of the plant gives rise to fruits. Pollination is generally performed by insects, birds and the wind – they help in transferring pollens grains from the male part of the plant to its female part. Humans can also be involved in this process by hand pollination.

When the Prophet witnessed the local residents of Madinah performing pollination in the date palms, he remarked, “If you didn’t do this, it would make no difference.” Hearing this, the locals abandoned the practice. Consequently, the production of dates decreased significantly in the following season. The Prophet passed by these people once again and asked them about the reason for the decline in yield. The

people of Madinah informed him that they had been performing pollination for centuries. “Since you discouraged the practice, the produce was affected.” In resignation, the Prophet allowed them to continue with pollination, saying, “You have better knowledge of your worldly affairs.” (Sahih Muslim 2363)

This was neither acknowledgement of ignorance on the Prophet’s part nor an expression of humility, rather the promulgation of a great truth, illustrated in the form of the unique incident quoted above. The Prophet’s statement was an encouragement to separate belief from scientific research. In ancient times, for thousands of years, religious belief was intermingled with knowledge of other disciplines. This is why, any scientific discovery that went contrary to the belief of the religious elite of the time was cruelly suppressed. It was for this reason that the Greek philosopher Socrates was sentenced to death by the religious establishment of his time. Socrates was one of the leading intellectual figures of Greece four hundred years before Christ, but some of his ideas contradicted the tenets of the Athenian government. Consequently, he was forced to consume poison as punishment for corrupting the minds of the youth and for impiety.

From Socrates to Bruner and Galileo, thousands of scholars had done research in different fields

of knowledge. They conducted studies in botany, astronomy and other scientific disciplines, but all of them were eventually persecuted. Strong exception was taken to a scholar's findings that differed from the religious dogma approved by the state or clergy. This is why, many in the past were gagged, imprisoned or even put to death.

It is related that at the time Romans conquered Greece, a reputed scientist and mathematician of the era was preoccupied with finding a solution to a mathematical problem in the desert. Without trial, a Roman soldier instantly beheaded the scientist, fearing that he might arrive at a dictum that went against the Roman religion.

The independent thinking so essential for intellectual progress was repressed, and that was why, the sciences could not flourish in an atmosphere of lack of freedom. On various occasions in history, there have been individuals who conducted valuable research; however, the fate of these researchers was unfortunate, their voice being promptly silenced. It is pertinent to mention here that the inclusion of the digit zero in the numeral system was first conceived in India as early as the 5th century AD. According to this system, a zero after the digit "1" makes 10, two zeros make 100 and three zeros make 1000. However, this numeral system

did not receive acclaim until it came to the knowledge of the Abbasids around 8th century AD, who inherited it from the Indians through translations, made original contributions to the field and became instrumental in transmitting it further to Europe.

In earlier times, religious groups were involved in persecuting those who discovered novel ideas. As soon as a new study was learnt of, it would swiftly be stamped out. It was for the first time in history that the Prophet Muhammad proposed the separation of science from religious belief, as is reflected in the above tradition: "You have better knowledge of your worldly affairs."

Messengers of God come to guide people about the unseen world which will unfold after death. They inform us about the realities of the world Hereafter. They speak about phenomena which can neither be researched on nor observed through our instruments. This is why, these matters are addressed by God's messengers. However, fields in which one can find answers through experimentation and observation are left to human beings to explore by conducting research. Since religion and science were not considered separate fields in ancient times, people found it difficult to detach one from another. Consequently, many brilliant minds had to suffer persecution for their discoveries.

For instance, Galileo presented the theory that the earth revolved around the sun. While this theory was ostensibly related to celestial bodies, it contradicted a conventional Christian belief. According to this ancient Christian idea, since the Prophet Jesus was the son of God, it was not conceivable that the planet on which he was born should revolve around any other object. To maintain the earth's singular position as the sacred birthplace of Jesus Christ, it was assumed that all other planets of the solar system and the sun should naturally revolve around the earth.

MUSLIMS' CONTRIBUTION TO HUMAN WELFARE

Al-Idrisi was the first cartographer to propose the idea that the earth was not flat, rather, it was round, like a pear, with land masses on both ends.

Muslims often take pride in their history but deriving such satisfaction from the past can never bring us back to that era. Unless we strive in the manner that Muslims of the earlier period did, we will never be able to perform the exemplary role in the advancement of civilization that our forebears were able to. I will illustrate this point with an example. It is related to the Italian explorer and navigator Christopher Columbus (d. 1506 AD), who is credited with the discovery of the new world, now called America. Historians acknowledge that the Muslim geographer Abu Abdullah Muhammad al-Idrisi (d. 1165 AD) made a vital contribution in this discovery. During al-Idrisi's time, the general perception was that the earth is flat. Nobody ever

imagined that people could journey from one end of the earth to the other end. Al-Idrisi was the first cartographer to propose the idea that the earth was not flat, rather, it was round, like a pear, with land masses on both ends. His book included one of the most advanced medieval descriptions of the world map, called *Tabula Rogeriana*. For drawing the map, al-Idrisi incorporated knowledge from his extensive travels and information gathered from various merchants, explorers and voyagers. Al-Idrisi's book has been translated into several European languages and published in many countries. Columbus also read a translation of al-Idrisi's book and based on it hypothesized that a long journey across the sea would lead him to new land. Taking inspiration from this idea, he undertook his famous sea voyage which led him to the then undiscovered country, America.

The spirit that inspired Muslims in this age came from the desire to make positive contribution to people's lives and bestow beneficence on them. The developments in this period were bolstered by the participation of and services offered by Muslims. This led to the making of a new history which transformed the ancient world. How can Muslims command the same respect and prestige in the present age, when they have ceased to make any significant contributions

for the betterment of humanity? If we wish to regain our lost position, we must again become givers members of society.

In this regard, I would like to make another point. A fundamental reason for the backwardness of present Muslims is that they lagged behind in acquiring modern education. This is the primary factor responsible for their inability to make contributions to society. It is indeed a fact that Muslims are educationally the most backward community in India, according to the statistics and surveys published by the government of India. In some places, even the Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes fair better than Muslims.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION IN ISLAM

The Prophet declared that a Makkan prisoner of war could ransom himself by instructing ten children of Madinah to read and write. This was not a simple matter, rather it was a momentous step.

The present condition of Muslims has not got to do with religion. I would like to narrate an incident that demonstrates the importance of education in Islam. A remarkably unprecedented event occurred in the history of early Islam which elucidates the significance of gaining knowledge.

After the Prophet migrated from Makkah to Madinah, the Makkan opponents of the Prophet launched aggressive wars on Muslims. Initially, the Makkan leaders' activities were limited to inflicting atrocities on the believers. But after the Muslims shifted to Madinah, the Makkan opponents forced them to combat in the battlefield. One of these wars is famous as the Battle of Badr because it occurred at a place

called Badr in 624 AD. Muslims emerged victorious in this battle, while seventy of the chieftains from the rival Makkan camp were taken hostage and brought to Madinah. At the time, the inhabitants of Makkah were largely literate, while that of Madinah were comparatively illiterate. The seventy hostages belonged to the educated elite of Makkah.

According to the precedent in Arabia, prisoners of war were awarded no concessions and were promptly beheaded with the sword. This severe treatment was meted out because the enmity of prisoners of war was proven beyond any doubt. It had become well-known that these were a group of people who would go to any extent, even war, in opposition to their rivals. Releasing the hostages left one exposed to the threat of their re-organizing themselves to carry out further hostilities. This is why, exterminating them was the only safe option available.

This sort of treatment of prisoners of war was an established custom in the ancient world. But contrary to it, the Prophet declared that a Makkan prisoner of war could ransom himself by instructing ten children of Madinah to read and write. This was not a simple matter, rather it was a momentous step.

These seventy hostages were among the leaders of the thirteen-year movement of persecution directed

at the Prophet and his followers in Makkah. They had forced the Prophet to leave his native Makkah, continued their belligerence after the migration of the believers to Madinah and sought in every way to completely wipe out their existence. The formidable threat they posed was cause for deep apprehension, as there was every possibility that once set free, they would regroup to attack, lay siege on and conspire against the Muslims. Later events confirmed these misgivings. After being released, these very people were responsible for inciting their tribesmen to war. They mustered a strong force to launch hostilities at Madinah to avenge the loss at Badr. This incident is recorded in history as the Battle of Uhud, fought in 625 AD. This points to the grave risk that the Prophet invited in releasing the prisoners of Badr, as they were the ones who planned and organized the assault at Uhud, in which the Muslim side suffered massive defeat, many Companions lost their lives and the Prophet himself was pushed into a ditch, wounded and bleeding.

The Prophet exposed himself to the threat of war for the sake of educating ten children of Madinah. This episode implies the paramount importance that the Prophet attached to education. The Prophet allowed the prisoners to walk free if each one of them agreed

to teach ten Muslims residents of Madinah, even though there was strong suspicion that these very people would strike back on being liberated. The Prophet's reasoning behind this extraordinary step was the conviction that even if Muslims were left exposed to defeat in the battlefield, the education that they acquired would in future enable them to win far greater battles in intellectual, scientific and academic fields. Later events verify that Muslims worked to bring about a revolution, one that had far-reaching influence on the course of history. This is why, the Prophet risked the perils of war and released his opponents by allowing each one of them to ransom himself by teaching ten Muslims how to read and write.

It is indeed astonishing that a religion that placed such enormous emphasis on gaining knowledge and pioneered the tradition of learning has believers in the present age who have fallen behind in the sphere of education.

WHY PRESENT MUSLIMS ARE LAGGING BEHIND IN EDUCATION

They were good speakers, and good speakers are those who possess deep insight and understanding, which is why they don't speak unnecessarily.

Another important observation in this connection is that a reading of Muslim literature of the last two centuries describes the mindset that Muslims have developed over past several decades. The debates and arguments in this literature are predominantly concerned with the issue of permissibility of non-Muslim teachers for Muslim children. Muslims were extremely wary of sending their children to schools because they would appoint Hindu, Christian or British teachers for instruction. Muslim parents preferred to deprive their children of modern education over allowing them to be schooled by non-Muslim teachers.

It is important to bear in mind that the greatest school of Madinah, instituted by the Prophet himself, had

delegated the task of tutoring to polytheist teachers who were stringent in their opposition to Islam. The teachers of the first school in Islam were pagan non-Muslims, while the followers of Islam in the later period have lagged behind in education solely because they didn't allow their youth to go to schools that employed the services of teachers from among Christians, Hindus, the British and other non-Muslim communities. It was extremely imprudent on the part of Muslims to hamper their children's educational progress and leave them intellectually unenlightened owing the presence of non-Muslim teachers in educational institutes. These are stark realities of history.

The first school of Islam, established after the Battle of Badr, consisted of teachers who were prisoners of war and hostile to Islam. Regardless of the precariousness of the situation and the high risks involved, the Prophet entered into an agreement with these men according to which they could obtain their freedom in return for educating ten Muslim children. It is ironical that while the first school in Islam set up by the Prophet had opponents of Islam as teachers, Muslims of the later period prevented their children from receiving education because the tutors and lecturers at schools were Hindu, Christian or British. I wonder how this absurd notion came into existence. We can only

infer that perhaps these people do not possess deep knowledge of the events from the Prophet's life and are also unaware about the history of Islam.

There is an incident which has come down in historical records from the time when Abu Bakr was caliph. On being elected as caliph, Abu Bakr had a very important task to perform. Before taking action, he assembled people in the Mosque of the Prophet and addressed them: "Advise me, O people!" Even after listening to Abu Bakr's request, the Companions who had gathered together remained silent for long. (Hayatus Sahabah v. 1, p. 432) The word used in the tradition to describe the Companions' response is *atarqar*, which means to bow one's head in silence. Compare this with a group of Muslims who converge at a place in any part of the Muslim world today and are similarly requested to put forward their suggestions on the issue under discussion. Every member in the congregation would be eager to voice his opinion. The Companions of the Prophet, on the contrary, were least desirous of speaking. I often say that a person is competent to speak only when he knows how to remain silent.

Why did the Companions choose to remain quiet when asked to speak? It was not because they were at a loss for words, or that they were too unintelligent to have an opinion, or that they had been deprived of

their tongues. No, indeed! The truth is that they were a people who were not habitual to excessive talking. They were good speakers, and good speakers are those who possess deep insight and understanding, which is why they don't speak unnecessarily.

THE NEED FOR REASSESSMENT

Speaking about something which one does not intend to perform is an example of hypocrisy, which is indeed a great sin.

Recently, A person approached me to discuss about the controversy surrounding Salman Rushdie. In my monthly journal *Al-Risala* I had spoken strongly against those who had issued fatwas demanding Rushdie's death. This gentleman who came to me contended that Rushdie deserved death and should be promptly assassinated. He complained that in not endorsing this opinion, I was advocating cowardice in my stance on the matter.

I explained to him: "Had you been true to your words, you would have been present in London at this moment to accomplish the task you are championing with such fervour." Innumerable Muslims zealously displayed slogans on the streets demanding that Rushdie be put to death, but did any one among them have the sincerity to travel all the way to London to put his words into effect? These people only tried to 'kill' Rushdie in their

fiery speeches. None among the lot who clamoured for murdering Rushdie went to London to search for the writer and devise a way to kill him, or at the least get arrested in the performance of this act. These people 'killed' Rushdie only in their impassioned appeals delivered from stage or expressed in their journals. Such people have been addressed in the Quran in these words: "Why do you say one thing and do another? It is most hateful to God that you say what you do not do." (61:2-3)

Speaking about something which one does not intend to perform is an example of hypocrisy, which is indeed a great sin. I am of course not arguing that Rushdie be put to death. Here, my point is that we Muslims must initiate a process of rethinking. We must commence with reassessing the ideas and notions we have come to acquire.

As I pointed out above, our educational progress has slackened because of our erroneous belief that we cannot send our children to schools that have Christian teachers. If we had critically evaluated this mindset, we would have realized that in the early history of Islam even the service of those hostile to Muslims was utilized for instructing Muslim children. We should have readily adopted this principle and not committed the blunder of obstructing our children from receiving education in modern secular schools. A mistake of this proportion happened because we have not drawn wisdom from the life of the Prophet.

DEAREST TO GOD ARE THOSE WHO ARE MOST BENEFICIAL TO PEOPLE

By God, he is not a believer, by God he is not a believer,
by God he is not a believer whose neighbour is not
safe from his mischief." (Sahih al-Bukhari 6016)

The subject for today's address is service of humanity. In this regard, the Companions enquired from the Prophet: "Who among the people is dearest to God?" The Prophet replied: "The person who is most beneficial to people." (Al-Targheeb wal-Tarheeb, v. 3, p. 347)

If while sitting at home you play the radio at loud volume, it may cause inconvenience to a student in the neighbourhood who would be preparing for his exams. He may find it difficult to focus on his studies, which may adversely affect his results in the exam. The responsibility for the student's performance would fall squarely upon you. This is just one example of the innumerable ways you can prove to be of

service to your neighbours. If you cannot do any good to people, at least refrain from harming them. The Prophet exclaimed: “By God, he is not a believer, by God he is not a believer, by God he is not a believer whose neighbour is not safe from his mischief.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 6016)

There are several verses of the Quran and sayings of the Prophet on this subject. Working for the welfare of humanity means being beneficial to people.

In November 1988 issue of my journal *Al-Risala*, I had written about an incident of an acquaintance of mine, Mr. P.D. Malhotra, who was born in 1935. He came to visit me on August 24, 1988. He told me that one day he had stayed back after working hours to finish some task at his office in New Delhi. When it struck midnight, there was silence all around in the city. He set out for his home on his two-wheeler. At one of the checkpoints on the road, a policeman signalled him to stop, wondering why a person was roaming about the streets in the middle of the night. The policeman angrily demanded him to produce his driving license. When he reached into his pocket to fetch his driving license, another card came out along with it. This was an eye donor's card. These days hospitals have initiated schemes through which people can volunteer to donate their eyes after death. One who agrees to

volunteer receives a card from the hospital stating that the concerned person had decided to donate his eyes. The prospective donor is required to carry this card with him all the time. Mr. Malhotra's eye donor's card read: "I have gifted my eyes to the Nation. Kindly inform the nearest Eye Bank immediately on my demise and help them to fulfil my desire. Thanks." The policeman, who had previously been rude, toned down immediately on seeing this eye donor's card and politely gestured Mr. Malhotra to proceed without any further investigation.

Eye donation is considered a noble deed. Televisions broadcast emotional appeals for eye donations by proclaiming, 'There is something which *only you* can offer to the world!' When the policeman saw the eye donor's card, he realized that Mr. Malhotra was an honourable and charitable person. The eye donor's card confirmed that he was a benefactor of society, something that turned the policeman in his favour.

In this world, those who give are also the ones who are given. Those who give to others, receive in turn from them. Such people become deserving of receiving from others even when they have not yet practically given anything but have only expressed their intention to give. This incident helped me understand a truth about life. Mr. Malhotra had not yet donated his eyes, rather he

had only exhibited his desire to do so. If you have done service to humanity, you have performed a virtuous task, but even if you just aspire to be of service to humanity, that too will have an overpowering effect on those around you. For example, in the above incident a person who was initially looked upon with mistrust by the policeman was afterwards regarded with the respect of one who is a sincere well-wisher of humanity. The policeman's anger was instantly pacified and transformed into reverence.

Without doubt showing benevolence and being of service to people are exalted deeds. If you have only sincerely expressed the intention to perform these acts of kindness, it would still work as an irresistible force in your favour.

Here I would like to cite an incident from the life of the Nobel laureate Dr Abdus Salam (d. 1996). I read about this incident in an article that Dr Abdus Salam had written for a journal. In one of his travels to Europe, Dr Abdus Salam had a conversation with an Orientalist. The Orientalist revealed that many countries in the East, especially the Muslim ones, sought aid from Western nations. He enquired why should these Muslims countries be given aid when they had made no contributions to human history? He offered this as a justification against the contention

that it was the responsibility of the West to provide financial assistance to Muslim countries.

We all know that today Europe and the US are providing monetary assistance to numerous countries of the world. Even countries with “petrodollars” are reliant on the US—all these nations are being sustained by the West. This is why, the Orientalist demanded an explanation for continuing to provide aid to dependent nations which had no share in scientific, technological or cultural progress. India, for instance, required passenger aircrafts Airbus. About twenty of these were purchased from France and are currently in service of Indian airlines. Dr Abdus Salam further writes that after listening to the Orientalist’s comment, he was left embarrassed and speechless.

ISLAM'S ROLE IN BRINGING ABOUT THE MODERN CIVILIZATION

The present-day civilization is a direct outcome of tapping into these secrets of nature.

I had been reflecting on Dr Abdus Salam's experience and was reminded of an extract from a recent encyclopedia published by the Oxford University. This scholarly compilation acknowledges that there had been a transfer of knowledge from the East to the West for several centuries during the medieval ages, with Muslim regions of Spain, Sicily and Baghdad being the principal sources of this transmission.

The Orientalist who commented on Muslims' contribution to the world incorporated the whole of history in his remarks. However, it would have been more appropriate to state that in the present age Muslims have no share in research and development taking place around the world. But so far as Muslims of the medieval times are concerned, their investigations into a variety

of disciplines led to considerable advancements in human knowledge which provided an impetus to the scientific revolution of the modern age.

I have written in detail on this subject in my book *Islam: Creator of the Modern Age*. One of the points discussed in the book pertains to the discovery of the laws governing nature which enabled human beings to develop science and technology that form the basis of modern civilization. These laws have existed throughout the universe since time immemorial, yet it took humans centuries to discover them. Given the possibilities of nature, why did so many thousands of years have to elapse? The answer to this historical question is that it was the advent of Islam that opened the doors of research and investigation into nature. The present-day civilization is a direct outcome of tapping into these secrets of nature.

Before Islam, certain erroneous notions were associated with religion. One among them was the inclusion of religion in every area of knowledge. A consequence of this tendency was that if any novel discovery in a discipline appeared to clash with religious beliefs, it was immediately trampled upon. Freedom of expression and independent reasoning were severely curtailed. This is why, although several individuals in the past made significant discoveries

through study and observation, their insights could not gain much momentum. They were obliterated when they came to the knowledge of the orthodoxy. Islam was the first to detach religion from science. This made possible free and independent enquiries into different branches of knowledge, which led to progress on many fronts.

In the period prior to Islam, polytheism held sway. This was a creed which looked upon things and creatures as deities and encouraged their worship. In ancient times polytheism dominated the entire world. Humans considered the moon a deity, just as they held all kinds of other inanimate objects to be gods. The moon, with its brilliant silvery light, inspired people to bow before it rather than step foot on it. When the moon was accorded the status of divinity, the very thought of conquering it was sacrilegious.

In the seventh century Islam presented the idea of monotheism, which soon became the dominant creed of the times. In the monotheistic belief, the Creator is divine while the everything else, including nature and the universe, is part of His creation. The view of the sanctity of all of nature's phenomena had made studies in natural sciences forbidden territory. It was the revolution of monotheism, which opened the doors of research and exploration by displacing nature from

its sacred pedestal. Thus began a new era of freedom to investigate nature. The slow, thousand-year process of maturation finally culminated (towards the end at an ever-accelerating pace) in modern science and technology. Modern science is wholly the gift of the Islamic revolution – directly in its initial stages, and indirectly in its later stages.

This truth has been generally acknowledged in one way or another. A number of books which have come out in modern times, with titles like *The Scientific Achievement of the Arabs*, or *The Muslim Contribution to Civilization*, testify to its general acceptance. Scholars are in agreement that modern industrial progress owes its existence to Arabo-Muslim influences. A. Humboldt writes: "It is the Arabs who should be regarded as the real founders of physics." Philip K. Hitti writes in his book, *History of the Arabs*: "No people in the Middle Ages contributed to human progress so much as did the Arabians and the Arabic-speaking peoples."

Historians have generally accepted that it was the science, which reached Europe through the Arabs (who were, of course, Muslims), which finally brought about the Renaissance. Hitti writes that Arabic translations of books available in different languages, as well as original works prepared by the Arabs in Arabic after

the establishment of Bait al-Hikmah in Baghdad in 832, were translated into Latin, and this stream was “re-diverted into Europe by the Arabs in Spain and Sicily whence it helped create the Renaissance of Europe.”

In the present age, the lamentable condition of Muslims is attributable to their misguided leadership. However, by the will of God, this situation will certainly change for the better in the future.

DON'T LET BLOOD FLOW WHERE "WATER" IS SUFFICIENT

The Prophet's model inspires us to gain the love and sympathy of people through kindness, benevolence, forgiveness and patience.

I would like to conclude by quoting an incident from the life of the Prophet. Once the Prophet and his Companions were conversing in the Mosque of Madinah. Some moments later, a Bedouin Arab entered the mosque and defiled a spot in the precincts of the sanctuary. The Prophet's Companions became furious and rose to beat up the Bedouin. The Prophet forbade them and instead directed them to purify the soiled spot by pouring a bucket of water on it. The Bedouin thereafter returned to his tribe. Since this experience with the Prophet influenced him profoundly, he would roam about the streets telling his tribesmen how he had desecrated Muslims' place of worship and he would enthusiastically exclaim: "By God, Muhammed did not rebuke me! By God, Muhammad did not chastise me!" (Sunan Ibn Majah 1:529)

This single act of kindness and forgiveness which cost only a bucket of water encouraged the Bedouin's entire tribe to accept Islam. On the contrary, we Muslims in the present day lose no time in shedding blood when faced with instances of the above kind. We are prepared to let blood fall but have no the strength to pour a "bucket of water" to calm down a tense situation. We consider it beneath our prestige to clean "the dirt" left by an ignorant person. Instead of overlooking and remedying the folly of an ignorant person, we allow the matter to escalate out of control leading to a riot which spills blood all over on the streets. We let blood flow where "water" is sufficient. The Companions of the Prophet followed the Prophet's advice of pouring water and cleaning the spot defiled by the Bedouin. Such noble conduct on the part of the Prophet deeply impressed the Bedouin who would narrate the incident to every person in his tribe and then proclaim with astonishment: "By God, Muhammad did not reproach me! By God, Muhammad did not punish me!" Just one bucket of water served to mellow down and subdue a whole tribe of people. In comparison, the volume of blood that we have sacrificed in present times has given us nothing in return. Up until now we have spent blood equivalent to thousands of buckets. But has this

enormous quantity of blood conquered the heart of even one person?

In the past several decades, our failure to follow the prophetic model of avoidance and patience has made us incur heavy losses. The Prophet demonstrated wisdom in not getting enmeshed in disputes. Moreover, he had the foresight to manage problems created by others so that a potentially explosive situation could be nipped in the bud before intensifying beyond the possibility of peaceful resolution. Present Muslims' actions have been utterly inconsequential in resolving matters and could not influence even a single person to change his mind. In the past, the Prophet's sublime behaviour proved to be an irresistible force in winning over the hearts and minds of large groups of people.

The Prophet's model inspires us to gain the love and sympathy of people through kindness, benevolence, forgiveness and patience. Bloodshed can spread conflict in society, but it can never persuade people to soften their stance in our favour.

ASPIRE TO BE GIVER MEMBERS OF SOCIETY

The upper hand is better than the lower hand."
(Sahih al-Bukhari 1429)

Today you all have assembled to donate blood at the newly inaugurated blood bank. Donating blood is a noble deed as it has the unique ability to sustain life. Your blood is the most valuable gift you can present to a person in need. Here, I am obviously not referring to the blood that is spilled on the streets in violent confrontations. If someone desecrates our place of worship, raises provocative slogans or behaves in an unpleasant manner, we become furious and rise in a violent uproar, which leads to riots leaving death and destruction in their wake. What has been the outcome of such bloody agitation? It hasn't prompted even a single person to submit to God Almighty. But the gesture shown by the Prophet of pouring a single bucket of water to clean the impurity left by a Bedouin worked to calm the tempers of an angry people and

weaken their hostility. Their indignation gave way to friendliness and an earnest desire to understand the prophetic message.

I consider this act of blood donation as a symbol of your resolve to serve humanity. I hope that all of you will contribute to this noble cause and also extend your cooperation to similar activities organized in Kashmir and other parts of the country.

We must develop the desire to live in this country not as a taker group, but as a giver group. At present, our attitude is to demand from and make appeals to others. This is the general tendency seen among our leaders as well as the masses. We clamour for the fulfilment of our rights, register complaints and harbour endless grievances. All these are characteristics of a taker group. The Prophet, on the other hand, had counselled: “The upper hand is better than the lower hand.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 1429) This tradition enjoins believers to be givers and not just takers. The giver members of society are truly worthy of veneration. This initiative of opening a blood bank is symbolic of the aspiration of the Muslim community to live as a giver group in this nation.

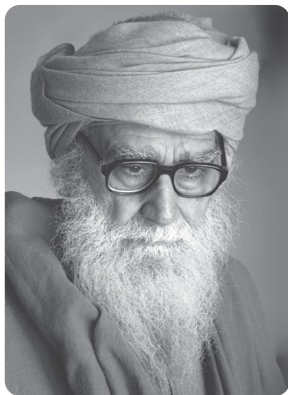
I pray to God for sending down His blessings to those engaged in this task of serving humanity. May God bestow prosperity on you, may your actions bear fruit

and may you have the cooperation of those around you. May the entire community unite for the welfare of humanity. May God help you overcome your differences.

In the end, I would like to seek forgiveness from you all if anything I said hurt anyone of you. I swear upon God, I had no intention to cause distress to anyone or to demean anyone. I don't harbour animosity and resentment in my heart for any human being. My words are full of sincere well-wishing for all. If any sentence I uttered outraged your feelings, I would request you to forgive me. I beseech God to command the angels to wipe out those remarks from the record of my deeds. I also entreat to the Almighty to erase those words from your hearts. I further pray to God to give place in your heart to all the good that I presented before you. Finally, I seek refuge in God for myself and for you all.



In this booklet, the author explains that Islam encourages its followers to live as giver members of society and make positive contribution to people's lives. The Prophet encouraged independent thinking and research in the domains of human knowledge and worldly progress. This freedom to do scientific pursuit inspired Muslims of the Middle Ages to make remarkable advances in human knowledge. If present Muslims want to receive respect and honour, they too must prove themselves beneficial for humanity. The author also provides guidance for Muslims by reminding them about the prophetic attitude of patience and avoidance of conflict for maintaining harmonious relationships with people of other communities.



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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