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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



**A negative mentality is shaped by history
A positive mentality shapes history.**

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

ISSUE 44 AUGUST 2016

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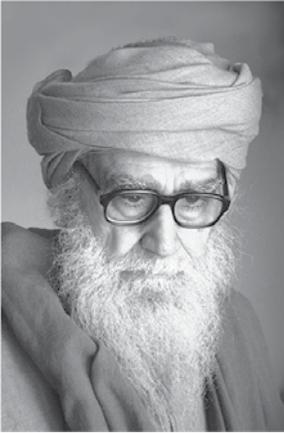
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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

UN-ISLAMIC CULTURE IN THE NAME OF ISLAM

JULY 1, 2016, six militants burst into the Holy Artisan Bakery, in an affluent area of Dhaka, Bangladesh. The assailants took several people hostage and attacked them with bombs, blades and pistols. Twenty hostages were killed in the ensuing terror attack.

Survivors of the onslaught said the killers made the hostages recite verses from the Quran to identify who among them were Muslims. Those who could recite verses from the Islamic scriptures were spared, the rest were killed. Reports state that the six militants chanted *Allahu Akbar* (God is great) as they stormed into the cafe and began wildly spraying bullets.

This kind of killing, a heinous crime, for which there is no justification, is most barbarous in nature. Even predatory animals do not make such a cruel attack on any creature, man or animal.

Labelling this act 'Satanic', would be an underestimation and its brutality cannot thus be properly expressed, because Satan never killed

1. The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims 2012, Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre, Jordan.

anybody. The way of Satan is only to deceive people by misleading them. This act of killing was worse than any act of Satan.

The Prophet once said that a time would come when Muslims would engage in unlawful acts. When his Companions asked him how this would happen, the Prophet replied, saying, 'Muslims of that time would make a forbidden act lawful for themselves, justifying it by another name.' (*Sunan al Darimi*)

It is evident that this prophetic prediction has come true. Today, Muslims have set out on a course of violence on a vast scale describing it as '*holy jihad*', although *jihad* essentially means a peaceful struggle. Muslims wantonly indulge in acts which they preface by the phrase '*Allahu Akbar*'; whereas a precise heralding of their wrongdoing would be to praise Satan who has deceived them into this brutality.

The incident that occurred in Bangladesh is a clear confirmation of the prediction set forth in the tradition of the Prophet. This act was wholly un-Islamic and no religious nomenclature or explanation can justify the atrocity.

The terror attack in Dhaka was both inhuman and un-Islamic act. It was also a very grave sin—tantamount to killing Islam itself. The true mission of Islam is that of peaceful *dawah*, namely, conveying to people the message of God by peaceful means. A violent act against innocent people is bound to distort the image of Islam to the extent that

The true mission of Islam is that of peaceful dawah, namely, conveying to people the message of God by peaceful means.

nobody would think of Islam as being worthy of consideration. Their rejoinder would be: 'Sorry, we need a religion of peace, whereas your religion is one of violence.'

Historical accounts show that Islam spread in Bangladesh through the peaceful activities of the Sufis, who had a tremendous influence upon the populations of that region. It was as a direct result of the peaceful preaching of the Sufi masters that the people of Bangladesh embraced Islam. It is ironic that those who

entered the fold of Islam as a consequence of such peaceful activities are now involved in the most brutal kind of violence.

This attack targeting foreign nationals was an extremely shameful act. The atonement for such a deed should be that the Bangladeshi people sincerely repent for it and never ever allow such an incident to recur in

their country. Undoubtedly, the attack carried out by the terrorists was unforgivable. According to God's law, however, there is always room for repentance. Therefore, those who have committed this crime must show repentance for their deeds and openly declare that by committing them, they were grievously in the wrong. □

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Maulana Wahiduddin Khan Conferred 'Mahatma Gandhi Seva Medal'

CPS founder and Islamic scholar Maulana Wahiduddin Khan was awarded the 'Mahatma Gandhi Seva Medal' in New Delhi on 11 July 2016. The award was conferred by the Gandhi Global Family, an organisation based in New Delhi. The Vice President of Gandhi Global Family, Mr. S. P. Verma, highlighted the decades-long work for peace done by the Maulana, both nationally and internationally. He stressed the importance of following Maulana's conciliatory approach to tackle the problem of violence and terrorism in the present times. The Maulana delivered his message on peace, saying that today we have to revive the nonviolent tradition of Mahatma Gandhi. He further said that it was his dream to see India become a spiritual lighthouse for the whole world.

THE CASE OF THE MASS SHOOTER AT ORLANDO

Psychologically Warped

ON June 12, 2016, a mass shooting terrorist attack and hate crime took place inside Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, the United States. It resulted in 53 wounded and 50 dead, including the gunman, who was killed by the Orlando police after a three-hour standoff. The shooter was identified as 29-year-old Omar Mateen, an American, born to parents of Afghan origin.

How did Mateen develop this extreme hate and anger? A close look at his life shows that he had come to look upon himself as a socially rejected person. He also felt that the social system had not supported him and he had not therefore, been able to fulfill his ambitions. This sentiment made him rage against the whole system and destroy those who represented that system. After a lot of thought, he narrowed his target down to Pulse, a gay night club which was a soft target. Here he poured out his anger on all those who were in the club that night. The result was one of the worst mass shootings in the history of the United States.

Omar Mateen wanted to become a full-fledged police officer. Last summer he applied for an intensive six-month law enforcement training course at the academy in his home town, Fort Pierce. The Daily Mail Online reported that officials at the Indian River State College's Criminal Justice Institute were so concerned about his 'deceptive' behavior that they rejected him. This rejection was not due to disfavour or discrimination but rather due to his own inability to measure up to their criterion. It was not a case of injustice. In fact, if we see it from the right angle, it was a case of true justice.

Address the mind of an angry man by reasoning with him and you will find that very soon he will of his own, reappraise his behaviour.

Study of such cases show that such offenders are generally obsessed with their own self-righteousness which leads them into blaming others. Consciously or unconsciously, they believe they are always right and others are always wrong. It is this mindset, rooted in self-rejection, which leads to hate and culminates finally in violence.

Analysis of such cases show that such people are obsessed with a one sided story of the case. When rejected, they tend to believe that others must be wrong in doing so. Sticking to a one sided story, they ignore others' points of view. For example, the gunman was rejected due to his own deceptive behaviour but he considered the rejection as discriminatory behaviour of others who had a negative perception of him.

They develop a strong belief that the other person is the oppressor and that they are the oppressed. This kind of thinking is unquestionably one sided, but they cannot see this. They are obsessed with unilateralism. Consequently, they get filled with anger which increases day by day until their whole personality is engulfed in it. At this point, they know nothing except hate, anger and revenge, and the final result is breakdown. It has rightly been said: 'When one's ego is touched it turns into super ego and the result is breakdown.'

The solution is that, those who are free of such negative sentiments as they are personally detached from the situation, should play an objective role. These 'outsiders' are generally teachers and counsellors. In that capacity, they must try to re-engineer the minds of people who have become psychologically warped and help them come to terms with reality.

Every angry man is angry because of his reaction to something. But reactionary thinking stems purely from an unrealistic approach. Address the mind of an angry man by reasoning with him and very soon he will of his own, reappraise his behavior. Everyone has an area of the mind which is amenable to reasoning, and by addressing this soft corner, you will surely conquer him without having recourse to the use of guns or bombs. □

Forgiving is Divine

To err is human; everyone is bound to do something wrong at one time or another. But, in such a situation, revenge means committing not just one mistake, but making mistake after mistake. On the contrary, forgiveness means undoing wrongs with rights. Perhaps this concept is expressed in the saying: 'To err is human, but to forgive is divine'.

FINDING COMMON GROUND

Promoting Friendly Atmosphere

Say, "People of the Book, let us come to a word common to us, that we shall worship none but God and that we shall associate no partner with Him and that none of us shall take others, besides God, for lords." (3: 64)

THE Quran describes an important principle for social life in the above words. What has been termed common word in the Quran—meaning common ground—is an essential principle for the conduct of social life.

The right way to begin any task involving social interaction is to find common ground between the concerned people, and then begin to operate within that frame of reference. This method is both practicable and effective.

There is no exhaustive list of types of common ground, for common ground cannot be arrived at by theorizing. It must be determined on the basis of the practical aspects of individual situations. No other procedure can be effective.

The point to be taken into consideration is the compulsions of the individuals involved and the current circumstances. Only then can it be determined what can serve as the common ground between the parties concerned.

Finding common ground is a matter of practical wisdom, and not a product of any ideology.

For instance, a single religious ideology could have become common ground for many different groups. But the present age is one of secularism. Now, what would be more effective would be to find common ground of a secular nature. Without this, our efforts will be infructuous so far as the various other people are concerned. It is essential to have a

common ground so that whatever work is in hand may be initiated and brought to fruition. Finding common ground is a matter of practical wisdom, and not a product of any ideology. □



NEVER LOSING HOPE

Staying Motivated

ABRAMHAM LINCOLN (1809-1865) was one of the founders of modern America. He is an iconic figure in the political history of America ranked as one of the country's greatest presidents. But Lincoln did not get this success by chance. To achieve this success and acclaim, he had to cross untold and uncounted failures. His struggles have been related in a few words below by one of his many biographers.

This man had failed in business in '31. He was defeated in politics in '32, he failed once again in business in 1834. He had a nervous breakdown in '41. In '43 he hoped to receive his party's nomination for Congress but didn't. He ran for Senate and lost in '55; he was defeated again in '58. A hopeless lose, some said. But Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States in 1860. He knew how to accept defeat—temporarily.

*Victory in this world
is only for the one
who has the courage
to accept defeat.*

Success always comes only after failures. Victory in this world is only for the one who has the courage to accept defeat. Everything has a price and the acceptance of failure is the true price of success. Those who are not willing to pay this price will never be able to reach the heights of success in this world.

The only secret of success in this world is the acknowledgement and acceptance that failure is only temporary. Never lose courage in your capacity of converting failure into success. □



Maturity

*The art of rejection is easy, but only
a great mind can accept new ideas.
Acceptance is a phenomenon of maturity.*

HAJJ: A PILGRIMAGE

Not a Tour

IT is incumbent upon Muslims to perform Hajj, at least once in a lifetime, if they possess the means. As is clear from the following excerpts from the Quran and *Hadith*, Hajj is one important pillar among the five foundation pillars of Islam.

Pilgrimage to the House is a duty to God for all who can make the Journey. (3: 97)

The first House ever to be built for men (to worship God) was that at Makkah, a blessed place, a beacon for the nation. (3: 96)

“There are five basic pillars of Islam,” said the Prophet Muhammad: “To bear testimony that there is no deity save God, and that Muhammad is His Prophet; to establish prayer and pay the poor-due; to make pilgrimage to the House and fast during Ramazan.”

The root meaning of the word Hajj is “to set out” or “to make pilgrimage.” Canonically, it has come to refer to a Muslim act of worship, performed annually, in which the worshipper circumambulates the Kabah in Makkah, stays awhile in the plain of Arafat and performs other rites which together constitute Hajj—the act of pilgrimage.

The journey to Hajj is a journey to God. It represents the ultimate closeness to God one can achieve while living in this world.

Hajj is a comprehensive act of worship, involving both financial outlay and physical exertion. Both remembrance of God and sacrifice for His sake are part and parcel of Hajj. It is an act of worship in which the spirit of all acts of worship has in some way or another, been brought into play.

The sacred duties of Hajj revolve around the House of God in Makkah. To a believer, the House of God brings to life a whole prophetic tradition, stretching from Abraham to Muhammad. The House of God stands as a model of true faith in God, and submission to the Master of the House. “The Prophets gave up everything and followed the Lord,” is the message that rings out from the Lord’s House; “leave all and follow Him. They were obedient to His will; be you so also. They served His cause on Earth; serve Him until you die, and you will prosper forever.”

The journey to Hajj is a journey to God. It represents the ultimate closeness to God one can achieve while living in this world. Other acts of worship are ways of remembering God; Hajj is a way of reaching Him. Generally we worship Him on an unseen level; in Hajj we worship Him as if we see Him face to face. When a pilgrim stands before the House of God he is moved to revolve around the Lord's House, like a butterfly encircling a flower, clinging to His doorstep as a slave begging for his master's mercy.

To perform Hajj is to meet God. When the pilgrim reaches the border of the Sacred Territory (*Meeqat*), he is filled with awe of God; he feels that he is leaving his own world, and entering God's. Now he is revolving around Him, running towards Him, journeying on His behalf, making sacrifice in His name, praying to the Lord and seeing his prayer answered.

Among all Muslim acts of worship, Hajj holds a prominent position. In one *Hadith*, the Prophet called it the supreme act of worship. But it is not just the rites of pilgrimage that constitute this importance, it is the spirit in which it is performed. Hajj is not merely a matter of going to Makkah and returning. There is much more to it than that. It has been prescribed so that it may inspire us with new religious fervour. To return from Hajj with one's faith in God strengthened and rekindled—that is the hallmark of a true pilgrim.

The House of God in Makkah is one of God's signs on earth. There, souls that have strayed from the Lord take comfort in Him once again; hearts which have become hard as stone are brought low before Almighty God; eyes which have lost their vision are filled with divine radiance. But these blessings of Hajj are only for those who come prepared for them. Otherwise it will be just a tour, a visit which leaves no lasting impression upon the tourist.

"Hajj is to stand in the plain of Arafat." These words of the Prophet Muhammad illustrate the importance of sojourning in the place. The plain of Arafat, in which pilgrims spend one day, presents a picture of the arena of Judgement Day. Host upon host of God's servants flock in from all sides to witness the spectacle. And what a spectacle! All are dressed in similar, simple attire. There is nothing to single out any person. All are reciting the same words:

***Hajj is a
comprehensive act
of worship, involving
both financial
outlay and physical
exertion.***

“Here we are at Your service, Lord,”

All those who witness this spectacle will be reminded of the following verse of the Quran:

When the Trumpet is blown, and behold, from the graves they rush forth to their Lord. (36: 51)

To return from Hajj with one's faith in God strengthened and rekindled—that is the hallmark of a true pilgrim.

The pilgrims gather on the plain of Arafat in order to recall the time when they will gather on the plain of the last day. They conjure up visions of what they will experience in the next world in this world itself.

For all these reasons, Hajj reigns supreme among all acts of devotion. Like the Sacred Mosque in Makkah has a station above all other mosques, so the worship that is performed there—as part of the pilgrimage—stands head and shoulders above all other acts of devotion. □



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PATIENCE (SABR)

A Fundamental Virtue

PATIENCE is the exercise of restraint in trying situations. It is a virtue which enables the individual to proceed towards worthy goals, undeflected by adverse circumstances or repeated provocations. If one allows himself to become upset by opposition, taunts or other kinds of unpleasantness, he will never reach his goals. He will simply become enmeshed in irrelevancies.

The only way to deal with the irksome side of daily living is to exercise patience. Patience will ensure that whenever one has some bitter experience, he will opt for the way of tolerance rather than that of reaction to provocation. It will enable one to absorb shocks and to continue, undeterred, on one's onward journey.

Patience, being a practical solution to the problems faced in the outside world, is also a means of positive character building. One who fails to exercise patience, gives free rein to negative thoughts and feelings, and develops a personality which is likewise negative. While one who remains patient is so morally bolstered by his own positive thoughts and feelings that he develops a positive personality.

Patience is no retreat. It only amounts to taking the initiative along the path of wisdom and reason as opposed to the path of the emotions. It gives one the strength to restrain one's emotions in delicate situations and to use one's brains to find a course of action along result-oriented lines.

Patience is no retreat. It only amounts to taking the initiative along the path of wisdom and reason as opposed to the path of the emotions.

The present world is fashioned in such a way that everyone is necessarily confronted with unpleasant matters at one time or another. Things which are unbearable have somehow to be borne; harrowing events have to be witnessed and all kinds of pain have to be suffered. In such situations, succumbing to impatience leads to the kind of unnecessary emotional involvement which is counter-productive, while a demonstration of patience has a healing, beneficial effect, allowing one to tread the path of discreet avoidance. Success in the present world is destined only for those who adopt the path of patience in adverse circumstances. □

QUIET ENDEAVOUR

Principle for Success

ON December 17, 1903, the brothers Orville and Wilbur Wright became the first men to successfully pilot a heavier-than-air craft under both control and power.

Orville and Wilbur Wright were bicycle makers from Ohio. When they set out to construct a flying-machine, they started from the most primitive constructions, and persevered until they had developed a craft fit to usher in a new age for man. While engaged in their preparation, they maintained the utmost secrecy. In order to ensure privacy, they bought a 600 acre farm in Kitty Hawk, a remote spot in the North Carolina coast. They made no attempts to publicize their project. When the first flight was made, Harry P. Moore, Marine reporter for the Norfolk Virginian Pilot, heard the news 55 minutes later from a guardsman at Kitty Hawk, Dan Simpson. He gave Moore the news that Orville Wright had been aloft for 12 seconds and had covered 120 feet.

This sensational news was received with scepticism by most national newspapers. When Moore sent out telegraph queries to newspapers all over the country, only five papers printed it. How could two unknown brothers, they thought, have achieved such a wondrous feat?

At the same time, much-publicized efforts to make the first flight in the history of man were continuing up the coast at Widewater, Virginia. The site was about thirty miles south of Washington D.C., the capital of America, and the eyes of the nation were on the project. The machine prepared there was the product of Samuel P. Langley, who was then America's most distinguished aeronautical scientist. Despite having the advantage of funds, publicity and expert know-how, attempts to make the first flight were unsuccessful. There were two failures, the last on December 10, 1903, before the Wright's epic feat.

The Wrights achieved by quiet endeavour what others could not achieve by much-publicized preparation. They kept their sights set firmly on the goal ahead of them, and ignored all other considerations. This is summed up in the response of Orville Wright to a question put to him after World War II, when terrible destruction had been unleashed by the aeroplanes that had been developed from his basic model. Had Wright thought that their invention would be used for such dreadful purposes as was now the case? "That day at Kitty Hawk," he replied, "we thought only of getting off the ground." □

TOWARDS GLOBAL PEACE

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



TOLERANCE, ITS SIGNIFICANCE TODAY

A MIDST the resurgence of ethnic conflicts, discrimination against minorities and xenophobia directed against refugees and asylum-seekers, tolerance is the only way forward, says a statement of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, (UNESCO). It is said, racism and religious fanaticism in many countries had led to many forms of discrimination and the intimidation of those who held contrary views. Violence against and intimidation of authors, journalists and others who exercise their freedom of expression, were also on the increase along with political movements which seek to make particular groups responsible for social ills such as crime and unemployment.

Intolerance is one of the greatest challenges we face on the threshold of the 21st century said the UNESCO statement. Intolerance is both an ethnic and a political problem. It is a rejection of the differences between individuals and between cultures. When intolerance becomes organised or institutionalised, it destroys democratic principles and poses a threat to world peace.

*A peaceful society
can be created only
by creating and
fostering the spirit
of tolerance towards
diversities.*

This proclamation of the U.N. is most apt and relevant today. The prime need of the world today is indeed tolerance.

One of the stark realities of life is that divergence of views does exist between man and man, and that it impinges at all levels. Be it at the level of a family or a society, a community or a country, differences are bound to exist everywhere. Now the question is how best can unity be forged or harmony brought about, in the face of the human tendency to differ.

Some people hold that the removal of all differences is the *sine qua non* for bringing about unity. But, this view is untenable, as it is not practicable. You may not like the thorns which essentially accompany roses, but it is not possible for you to pluck out all the thorns and destroy them completely. For, if you pluck out one, another will grow in its place. Even if you run a bull-dozer over all rose bushes, new plants will grow in their place which will bear roses ineluctably accompanied by thorns. In the present scheme of things, roses can be had only by tolerating the existence of thorns. Similarly, a peaceful society can be created only by creating and fostering the spirit of tolerance towards diversities.

The policy of tolerance or forbearance enhances your efficacy, while intolerant behaviour reduces it.

In this world, unity is achievable only by learning to unite in spite of differences, rather than insisting on unity without differences, for their total eradication is an impossibility. The secret of attaining peace in life is tolerance. There is nothing wrong in diversity of opinions. In fact, this is a positive quality which has many advantages. The beauty of the garden of life is enhanced if the flower of

unity is accompanied by the thorn of diversity.

An advantage flowing from this attitude is that it builds character. If you are well-mannered towards those whose views are similar to yours, you may be said to exhibit a fairly good character. But, if you behave properly with those holding divergent views from you or who criticise you, then you deserve to be credited with having an excellent character.

A society whose members hold identical views and never have any controversial discussions, will soon find itself in the doldrums. The intellectual development of the members of this society will be frozen, because personal evolution takes place only where there is interaction of divergent thinking. So where there is no such interaction, how can there be intellectual development?

The adoption of a policy of tolerance in the face of controversy and opposition is not a negative step. It is undoubtedly a positive course of action.

Divergence of views plays an important role in the development of the human psyche. It is only after running the intellectual gauntlet that a developed personality emerges. In a human society, if this process ceases to operate, the development of character will come to a standstill.

Nobody in this world is perfect. A person endowed with some good qualities, may be lacking in others. This is one of the reasons why differences crop up among people. But, for life as a whole, these differences are actually a great blessing: the good points of one person may compensate for the shortcomings of another, just as one set of talents in one person may complement a different set in another. If people could only learn to tolerate others' differences, their very forbearance would become a great enabling factor in collective human development.

The adoption of a policy of tolerance in the face of controversy and opposition is not a negative step. It is undoubtedly a positive course of action.

The habit of tolerance prevents one from wasting one's time and talent on unnecessary friction. When negatively affected by another's unpalatable behaviour, one's mental equilibrium gets upset. But if one remains emotionally untouched by such behaviour, the mind will fully retain its equilibrium and, without wasting a single moment, one will continue to perform one's work in the normal way. The policy of tolerance or forbearance enhances efficacy, while intolerant behaviour reduces it.

Tolerance is not an act of compulsion. It is a positive principle of life, expressing the noble side of a person's character. The existence of tolerant human beings in a society is just like the blooming of flowers in a garden. □



One should differentiate between an achievable and a non-achievable target, only then will one's efforts be fruitful.

THE RITUALS OF HAJJ

An Act of Worship

HAJJ, pilgrimage, is an act of worship. It is obligatory only for those who are in good health and who can afford to perform it. The indigent and the sick or disabled are excused.

In order to perform Hajj, the individual leaves his home for Makkah and Madinah. On entering Makkah he goes to the Kabah to perform its circumambulation. Then he does a brisk walk (*sa'i*) between the two hillocks *Safa* and *Marwa*, halts at Arafat, casts stones at a pillar which is a symbolic act of stoning Satan and then sacrifices an animal. These are the main rites of Hajj performed in the month of *Dhul Hijja* (the 12th month of the Lunar calendar).

Hajj is a symbolic expression of, man's full surrender before his Lord. Through the acts which make up Hajj the servants of God make a covenant of giving themselves entirely up to their Creator. They are prepared to make any kind of sacrifice for the Almighty.

During the rites and rituals of Hajj, the pilgrims recall the sacrifices made by the architects of the Kabah—the Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael. The pilgrims also visit those historical places, which relate to the life of the Prophet Muhammad. They spend a few weeks in such surroundings, the scene of early Islamic history.

Hajj refreshes the minds of the believers with the reality that although they belong to different races and nations, the belief in one God serves as a strong basis for universal unity.

In this way the Hajj becomes a means of linking the pilgrim to God and His messengers, and reminds him of the upright lives led by the pious servants of God. In effect, it creates the possibilities of live contact with the history of Islam.

Over and above this, Hajj unites worshippers the world over. It refreshes the minds of the believers with the reality that although they belong to different races and nations, the

belief in one God serves as a strong basis for universal unity. However diverse in upbringing they may be, and whatever the country or nation to which they belong, in respect of their being worshippers of God, they are all one and will always remain united. Hajj is in essence an act of worship, but in practice it affords many benefits affecting the entire Muslim brotherhood, one of these being universal unity. □

ON THE OCCASION OF DIFFERENCES

Unity in Diversity

DIFFERENCES are a part of life. A divergence of views and behaviour arises between people for a variety of reasons. Differences can occur between anyone. Even if differences cannot be prevented, that is no reason, for any individual to indulge in negative behaviour. It should be borne in mind that despite differences, positive behaviour is both a possibility and a necessity.

Regarding a person, as being wrong about everything just because he holds different opinions and calling him a hypocrite, bad intentioned and insincere are entirely un-Islamic reactions. The true believer looks at the issue of difference as a matter of intentions and limits any ensuing dissension to the sphere of its origin. He never allows matters to escalate.

Severing relationships due to differences is not in accordance with the spirit of Islam. Mutual relationships should be maintained while continuing serious discussion on contentious issues. Not greeting the person with whom one has differences or refusing to meet such a person is highly improper.

In this world everything is designed to put man to the test. Differences also serve this purpose. Man ought to be extremely cautious, particularly at moments of contention. He should continuously strive to be tolerant lest he show some improper reaction, which would be displeasing to God.

It is an act of superior worship when, in spite of controversies one keeps one's heart free of enmity and vengefulness and adheres strictly to the path of justice.

Remaining impartial in the face of differences is indeed a difficult task. But its reward too is great. Every right act is treated as an act of worship in Islam; it is therefore an act of superior worship when, in spite of controversies one keeps one's heart free of enmity, vengefulness and adheres strictly to the path of justice.

The emergence of differences is not in itself a bad thing. What is bad is that on the occasion of differences the individuals concerned do not rise above the situation. They fail miserably in the divine test. Remaining within the confines of piety at times of conflict is a great Islamic act, and crossing boundaries at such moments is wholly un-Islamic. □

INDIAN MUSLIMS

An Analysis of the Past 69 Years

ALL manner of sacrifices were made in order to achieve independence and to improve the system of the country after the removal of colonial rule. Yet, with the dawn of independence, the practical result was quite the reverse. The system of the country actually worsened.

Hopes associated with independence remain unrealized. Previous generations held the British responsible for all the problems, but when independence came, it in no way solved the problems, it actually aggravated them.

When the dawn appeared after the night of August 15, 1947, all the lights had gone out, and never again did they shine with the same brilliance. Never again was the same euphoria experienced as at the brink of being independent. The expected happiness had somehow failed to materialize and is yet to be found. What has happened? Amongst many reasons, for our discussion let us analyse the role of the Muslims in both the achievement of independence as well as the failure post independence.

Muslims & the Freedom Movement

Before 1947 Muslims were honoured and respected and they enjoyed a status of a, giver, group contributing towards the independence of the country. They played an important role in it at great sacrifice to themselves. But subsequently they failed to gain the same status. The cause was not traceable to enemy plots and prejudice, but lay rather in the internal weakness which had led them to divest themselves of their creativity in this modern age. They paid no heed to God's admonition that, only those would find permanence, stability and firmness in this world who proved themselves useful to others. (QURAN 13: 17)

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In the new India there were many opportunities for Muslims to have played a creative role.

They only had to identify and avail of them. There are two examples to illustrate this point. The first is given by Swami Vivekananda, an Indian

thinker on the subject of India's post-independence reconstruction. In one of his letters he writes "For our own motherland a junction of two great systems, Hinduism and Islam, is the only hope. I see in my mind's eye the future perfect India rising out of this chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedanta brain and Islam body".

The second example is given by Mahatma Gandhi. At the juncture of the formation of the Congress government through the pages of his journal *Harijan*, Mahatma Gandhi advised the Congress ministers to lead simple lives. He gave them examples of the lives of the Caliphs of Islam Abu Bakr and Umar. The rulers of vast empires, they lived nevertheless like ordinary men.

This appreciation of the Islamic Character shown by Swami Vivekanand and Mahatma Gandhi testifies to the ability of the Muslims to play a great part in the construction of India. In fact, the country was waiting for the Muslims to grasp the opportunity to play a decisive role and win an honourable position for themselves in the re-structuring of the nation. But the Muslims failed to fulfill these hopes.

The Reasons for Failure

Patience is the price of leadership. An inevitable pre-condition of assuming the role of leadership in any country or community is to bear resolutely, the provocation or injustice of others. Without this patience and forbearance, no one can with distinction wear the mantle of leadership of the world. This is an immutable law of God and to it there can be no exceptions. The Muslims failed to adopt a unilateral policy of non-confrontation on all occasions and developed a negative mentality which led to this failure.

What can be done now?

Islamic history abounds in instances of exemplary conduct that the general public could have benefitted greatly from having them presented in their correct historical context in a purely realistic style. Books should be prepared on these aspects of Islam which are of special relevance to contemporary issues; simplicity, modesty, trustworthiness etc., values without which no social order can be properly established.

Muslims should study Islamic teachings seriously and follow the guidelines which it presents for social reconstruction. The self-

In the light of the Quranic wisdom, the true role of the press should be constructive, not expostulatory.

development of Muslims is a primary condition for the pristine Islamic teachings to be propagated. For this development the Muslims have to unilaterally adopt the policy of avoidance and eschew all words and deeds which could produce communal hatred. No plans of reconstruction can materialize without their doing so. Only if they learn to bear all kinds of afflictions real or imaginary with patience and fortitude will they be able to engage in their own reconstruction.

Apart from making up for their backwardness in educational, economic and scientific fields, Muslims should develop themselves in the field of journalism. Journalism has an important role to play in this reconstruction. In the light of the Quranic wisdom, the true role of the press should be constructive, not expostulatory. Of course the press should have a powerful reach, but it must cultivate the kind of constructive thinking which will lead to a regeneration of the Muslim community.

Another important point is that any community paper which is brought out should be of very high standard. Muslim periodicals should be published in the mother tongue of their readers, so that language

***It must be borne
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may not prove an obstacle to bring about an awareness of the times and a sense of commitment at the community level. They should not encourage the lodging of protests and instead point the way to modern opportunities with exhortations to make the best possible use of them.

It is essential to cultivate journalistic consciousness among the educated class of Muslims. Problems and difficulties should not be made into serious issues, considering that

in this world it is hardly possible to have a completely problem-free life. It must be borne in mind that God's law for this world provides for difficulties and ease to exist side by side at all times.

With a clear understanding of the creation plan of God and a firm faith in God Muslims together with everyone else should work unitedly towards the development of this country and towards a peaceful and harmonious future. □

CPS International, a non-profit, non-governmental and non-political organisation helps individuals de-condition and re-engineer their minds towards positivity and peace through its literature. 'Spirit of Islam' magazine is the English voice of the CPS mission. (www.cpsglobal.org).

FROM THE SPIRITUAL TREE

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



WHEN ALL THINGS COME TO LIGHT

THE cosmos is full of meaning. It accepts nothing which is contrary to its nature and is not in accord with its design. Yet man wreaks evil and indulges in corruption on the earth, the most fertile and exquisite portion of the universe. Truth is trampled upon in the name of progress and the cosmos, despite its meaningfulness, stands by in silence. It does not condemn the evil, which is openly committed on earth. It does not proclaim truth and falsehood for what they are.

Does the cosmos contradict itself?
Is it incapable of expressing itself?

There are birds that sing melodiously, but is there no cosmic voice to proclaim the truth? There is, certainly, but God has silenced the voice of truth until the resurrection of man. When man rises from the dead, all things will testify to the truth. The whole universe will bear witness to the truth, and will give evidence before God. Justice will prevail.

God has silenced the voice of truth until the resurrection of man. When man rises from the dead, all things will testify to the truth. The whole universe will bear witness to the truth, and will give evidence before God.

People will then realize that just as the cosmos possessed a sun to convert night into day, it also possessed a means of bringing to light such deeds as had remained concealed in obscurity.

Those who had rebelled on earth will pay in full for their rebellion; they will be cast into the fire of Hell. And those who had served God will be rewarded for their righteousness; God will be merciful to them. They will be admitted to heaven, where they will enjoy an everlasting life of honour and content. □



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RESPONSIBILITY ACCORDING TO CAPACITY

A Wise Policy

ISLAM adheres to the principle of giving such responsibility as is commensurate with individual capacity. Giving anyone more responsibility than one is capable of handling is not the way of God. This principle applies to society as well as to individuals.

But what holds for the individual does not necessarily hold for society, as the basic assumptions are different. So far as an individual is concerned, he has full control over his personal matters. It is possible for him to do whatever he regards as being right and proper. He can opt for the way of idealism if he has only himself to consider.

But the case of society is more complex. Social matters always concern several people. Therefore, only that method will work in the case of society, upon which people are in agreement. Besides, if any concept is externally imposed on society, a state of impasse will certainly develop. People will be at loggerheads with one another. There will be clashes and confrontations. Far from attaining what is desirable the result will only be confusion or even violence.

The only solution to this problem is that the demands of the different sections of society be separated from each other. The principle of aiming at the ideal should apply to individuals and the principle of the acceptance of what is practical should apply to society. For instance, all individuals can act with justice. On the contrary, establishing justice as a system is a matter relating to the whole of society. The former depends on the individual's personal choice, whereas the latter depends on the collective choice of society. Thus we can sum up by saying that the only solution is to adopt the principle:

The principle of aiming at the ideal should apply to individuals and the principle of the acceptance of what is practical should apply to society.

Idealism at the individual level, and pragmatism at the social level.



NEGATIVE MINDSET

Most Harmful

Recite to them the tale of the man to whom We gave Our signs, but who then cast them to one side and Satan overtook him. And he became one of those who went astray, if it had been Our will, We could have used these signs to exalt him, but instead he clung to the earth and followed his own desires, he was like a dog that pants whether you chase it away or leave it alone. Such are those who reject Our signs. Tell them this story so that they may reflect.

(7: 175-176)

THE Quran describes a particular character in the above verse. Here, 'signs' refers to Divine guidance, and by panting is meant a complaining mentality. A person or group that does not take any lesson from Divine guidance will begin to follow Satan. No matter what situation such a person may face, he will constantly engage in negative talk. If, under Satanic influence, someone becomes habituated to thinking negatively, he will come up with something or the other to complain and crib about, even in the most favourable or pleasant situation. No matter what the situation is he will constantly complain.

In line with the law of nature, life is not problem-free for anyone. No one's life can be free from challenges.

The fact of the matter is that, in line with the law of nature, life is not problem-free for anyone. No one's life can be free from challenges. In this world, we are faced with challenges all the time. There is just one way to handle this. And that is, to change one's negative thinking. Even in what appears to be a difficult situation one should avoid complaining and, instead, adopt the method of positive thinking. □

Principle of Unity

In this world, unity is achievable only by learning to unite in spite of differences, rather than insisting on unity without differences.

HUMAN BROTHERHOOD

Message of Hajj

ACCORDING to Islam, all human beings have been created by one and the same God, and for this reason, belong to one great brotherhood. So far as their earthly origin is concerned, they are all descendants of the first pair of human beings created by God—Adam and Eve. In their subsequent spread over different parts of the world, variations in geographical conditions produced a diversity of skin colouring, languages and other racial characteristics.

The teaching of Islam in this regard is that despite differences of colour, language, etc., people should harbour no ill-will towards those who are apparently unlike themselves, for discriminating between one man and another is not approved by God. They should rather promote fellow feeling towards others, even if at first glance they appear like total strangers to them. Bearing in mind that they are all traceable back to Adam and Eve, they should be each other's well-wishers and willingly come to one another's assistance, like members of the same large family.

Ideally, the relation between one man and another ought not to be one of strangeness but one of familiarity; not of distance but of nearness; not of hatred but of love. All human beings are descendants of the same progenitors, which means that all are equal: no one is superior or inferior. The distinction between great and small is not between one human being and another, but between God and men. And before God, certainly, all human beings are equal; all are equally His creatures and His servants. For God does not discriminate between one and the other of His creations. □

Ideally, the relation between one man and another ought not to be one of strangeness but one of familiarity; not of distance but of nearness; not of hatred but of love.



Two incompatible concepts cannot occupy an equal place in one person's mind.

THE POLICY OF THE PROPHET

Pragmatic

FROM a study of the Prophet's life, we learn an important principle—that of differentiation. That is to say, understanding significant distinctions in practical matters, and dealing with them accordingly. This differentiation is a principle of nature and the course followed by the Prophet of Islam bears out the fact that he made full concession to it.



One of the distinctions to be made is between word and deed. For instance, these words of the Prophet have been recorded in a *Hadith*:

The greatest *jihad* was to say a word of truth and justice to a tyrant ruler.

On the other hand, a number of traditions have been recorded in books of *Hadith* which show that even if rulers became tyrants, Muslims had to obey them, and never clash with them or adopt a policy of confrontation.

For instance, one of the Companions of the Prophet has been recorded as saying that the Prophet said,

In later times perversion will set in the rulers, whose bodies will appear to be those of human beings, while their hearts will be those of Satans.

The Companion then asked the Prophet what they were supposed to do at such times. The Prophet replied,

You must pay heed to your ruler and obey him. Even if you are flogged on your back, and your wealth is taken away from you, you must hear and obey him.

Let us make a comparative study of these two traditions. In the first *Hadith* we are encouraged to perform *Jihad* against the tyrant ruler, whereas in the second one we are strictly forbidden to do so. The reason for this difference is that the first *Hadith* relates to verbal advice while the second relates to practical confrontation. According to the *Hadith*, verbal advice is a desirable act, while practical confrontation is a totally undesirable act.

Here verbal advice does not mean issuing statements in newspapers, making speeches and staging protests. It only means that when one finds some perversion in a ruler, one should pray for him, and meet him by appointment in private and try to make him understand his shortcomings in total sincerity and with expressions of well-wishing.

When another Companion asked the Prophet how to perform the duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil to the rulers, he replied:

If you must do it, it should be done in complete privacy, with no one else between you and the ruler.

Similarly, Islam differentiates between individual and congregational action. In individual action, only one's own life is in danger (when an action is confined to the individual sphere, only an individual suffers the consequences). But in congregational initiatives, the lives of thousands of people are involved. It is therefore but natural that the command in each case is not identical.

An incident connected with the migration provides a pertinent example. When Umar emigrated from Makkah to Madinah, he took his sword, bow and arrows then came to the Kabah. The Quraysh leaders were seated there in the courtyard. First he circumambulated the Kabah, then performed two units of prayer. Finally he approached the Quraysh leaders and said to them: "Whoever wants his wife to become a widow and his children to become orphans should come and see me outside the city." (The Quraysh were persecuting everyone, particularly those who were migrating to Madinah, that was why Umar threw down this challenge to them.) Then Umar set off for Madinah and none of them followed him.

Islam always advises proceeding wisely and judiciously, and certainly does not favour acting on impulse.

But, unlike Umar, the Prophet migrated secretly. As we know, in the thirteenth year of the Makkan period, the Quraysh leaders met at *Dar-al-Nadwah* (Meeting Hall) to decide upon the steps to be taken to remove him from their path. The following night, a few young men wielding swords surrounded his house. But the Prophet, to avoid any confrontation, had quietly left the place at night under the cover of darkness. In this move the Prophet maintained such great secrecy that, although he had to go to Madinah from Makkah, he went in the opposite direction and remained hidden on the way for three days inside the cave of Thaur. Then he reached

Madinah by an unfamiliar route. Noting this dissimilarity of strategy, some biographers have raised this question of why Umar departed publicly, after challenging the persecutors and without any fear or apprehension, and why the Prophet migrated secretly, taking every precaution to ensure his safety. Did that mean that Umar was braver than the Prophet?

This question has no validity, for actions have to be judged in terms of their motivations, which will be different at individual and communal levels. Islam always advises proceeding wisely and judiciously, and certainly does not favour acting on impulse. However, an individual may be allowed to take such steps, if it is only he himself who is concerned. This will be no more than his personal choice, and his actions will not serve as a model for others.

The way Umar undertook his journey was justified by it being a personal or individual action, but the position of the Prophet of Islam was not merely that of an individual. The Prophet was the leader of the entire Muslim community. His each and every step served as an example for the entire community. Whatever he did was to be followed by the Muslims for all times, therefore, when it is a question of taking the initiative at the communal level, the same way would be adopted as that of the Prophet at the time of his emigration. That is, before taking any action, all precautions should be taken and full concessions made to the situation and circumstances.

The principle we derive from this incident of the Prophet's emigration is that if someone on his own personal basis, wanted to take a dangerous step, he would be allowed to do so. However, there is no doubt about it that an individual's taking such a step would remain a matter of option or concession and not one of compulsion.

But where a group or community is concerned, taking risky steps with no thought for the result is not allowed by Islam. Moreover, the individual enjoys this right solely in his own personal sphere. He is not allowed to instigate people to engage in emotional and ill-considered actions by means of provocative speeches and writings.

When an individual enjoys the position of a leader, he has to give proper consideration to the interests of the community. Even if he is not a leader, he has no right to incite people by his pen and speeches to adopt a course which might imperil them. He may take such a step in his individual capacity but under no circumstances is he allowed to lead unwary people into danger. □

RELATIVES AND NEIGHBOURS

Their Rights

A Muslim is required to maintain a good relationship with his relatives. According to a saying of the Prophet, we should visit our relatives, enquire about their circumstance, spend on them and give them *sadaqa* (voluntary charity) if they are poor.

According to another *Hadith*, if any one of our relatives does not treat us well, even then we have to treat him well. As we know, Islam enjoins us not only to be good to those who are good to us, but also to be good to those who are not good to us. This shows exemplary moral character according to the standard of Islam.

Here are some relevant verses of the Quran:

Give your relatives their due... (17: 26)

God commands justice, kindness and giving to near relatives....
(16: 90)

...And show kindness to your parents and to near relatives...(4:36)

The essence of Islam is thus to serve God and do good to our fellow men. The worship of God is linked with kindness to parents, kindred, and those in want. It is not a matter of verbal kindness. They have certain rights which must be fulfilled.

From the Quran and traditions we find that the institution of the family can only be maintained by feelings of well-wishing and kindness. So the Islamic laws of morality and decency must be observed. If we want to earn God's pleasure and blessings we must abide by the Quranic injunctions, and extend our full support to our relatives.

Rights of Neighbours

"Do you know what the rights of neighbours are?" asked the Prophet. And then he went on to give a list:

"Help him if he asks for your help. Give him relief if he seeks relief from you. Give him a loan if he needs one. Show him concern if he is distressed. Nurse him when he is ill. Attend his funeral if he dies. Congratulate him if he meets with any good. Sympathise with him if any calamity befalls him."

This tradition shows that we are not only supposed to have good will towards our neighbours but we should also offer practical help whenever they are in need. Nobody can be a believer, said the Prophet, if his neighbours pass the night hungry, while he has his stomach full.

Another *Hadith* tells us that nobody can be a true believer unless his neighbours feel secure from his hands and tongue. We are urged to be good and helpful to our neighbours in particular for they, being near, have more right to our goodness and assistance.

Such great emphasis laid by the Prophet on our good treatment of our neighbours shows that the aim of Islam is to awaken the springs of goodness in the human heart. If we can become good to our immediate neighbours, then that will be a guarantee of our being good to other people. For constant good conduct will surely develop a good moral character in us and that will surely reflect in our dealings with whoever we come in contact with.

If we observe the injunction of the Prophet in this matter, then without doubt we shall contribute to strengthening society with the bonds of love, affection and brotherhood. □

(This article is by Prof. Farida Khanam, Head of department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Millia, New Delhi)



Achieving a position

Sometimes, we have to resign ourselves to lowly positions before we can work ourselves up to more satisfactory heights.

CRITICISM AS AN INTELLECTUAL MIRROR

Welcome It

GENERALLY, no one likes to be criticised. Some people go to the extreme of abhorring any kind of criticism. But that is an unhealthy response, for criticism and dissent are positive elements in the lives of individuals and for societies.

An American scholar in answer to the question “What is the most important aspect of western culture?” replied: “Freedom of expression.” Elaborating on this point, he stated that in the West, dissent was taken whether right, wrong, good or bad—as a sacred right of the individual.

Criticism is part of intellectual exchange. When you discuss an issue with someone without any reservation, what you have to say is very likely to take the form of criticism. In any critical process there are two people: one who criticises and one who is the object of criticism. The former may expound a divergent viewpoint in a frank and open manner, and this encourages the latter to discover a new aspect of the subject under discussion.

So criticism is good for both persons concerned.

The universe of thought is vast. No single person can cover all arenas of thought or knowledge. Given this situation, criticism affords the opportunity to broaden and enhance one’s field of knowledge. It is a kind of give-and-take process.

For example, a mirror is also a critic—in a purely physical sense. If you have a spot on your face, the mirror will instantly draw your attention to it. And you accept this without the slightest reluctance. The same is true of the critic, who is like an intellectual mirror. If he points out some fault in your thinking, then you have to accept it. If you are not in a position to accept it instantly, you have at least to give thought to the point he makes. A negative reaction is not good because it is infructuous, both in the case of the intellectual mirror and the physical mirror.

Criticism affords the opportunity to broaden and enhance one's field of knowledge. It is a kind of give-and-take process.

Criticism is a process rather than an end. It entails discussion, which leads to intellectual development. Indeed, through the process of

criticism we embark on an intellectual journey trying to find answers to our questions. Criticism, opens the closed doors of a mind, and enhances thinking capacity. As such, criticism is always good.

Criticism promotes thinking along new and different lines. It is the result of thinking in a fresh and original way, and as such, it is a healthy factor in society. Because, as it has been said, 'When all think alike, no one thinks very much'.

Critical thinking is constructive thinking. Creative thinkers are always able to discover new things, but creative thinking cannot be developed without critical thinking. Accept criticism with a tranquil mind and you will soon discover that your critic was an intellectual enabler.

Our greatest weakness is that we live within the boundaries of our own mind. This kind of thinking tends to induce self-conditioning. No

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one, except your critic, can de-condition your mind. That is, he points out those negative aspects of your intellectual make-up that had hitherto been hidden from you. Everyone must, therefore, welcome the critic. The critic is the only one who can help you rid your personality of undesirable traits. So, be eternally grateful to him.

There is a saying: 'One who criticises you is better than one who praises you.' This saying is very correct and meaningful. One who discovers the value of criticism will surely appreciate criticism and happily accept it. □



United we stand

*Those who are intellectually
awakened have the power to
convert their disunity into unity.*

HUMAN EQUALITY

Practical Demonstration

ACCORDING to Islamic tenets, all human beings are equal. In prayer, all members of the congregation stand before God in the same rows together, and on the Hajj pilgrimage, all the believers belonging to different countries don identical white seamless robes for the performance of the obligatory rites. On the occasion of the Final Pilgrimage, it is noteworthy that the Prophet of Islam declared that no Arab was superior to a non-Arab and that no white was superior to a black. All were equally servants of God. In Islamic society, everyone is accorded the same status

How then can we rationalize what are apparently very great differences in human beings in terms of colour and race, etc., considering that the concept of human equality ranks so high in the value system of Islam? We find the answer in the Qur'an, which makes it clear that such outward differences are meant to serve as means of identification and were never intended as indicators of superiority (or inferiority). People in different parts of the world may have a diversity of skin colouring and other distinctive racial characteristics, but it is only for the purpose that they may be easily distinguished from each other. By Islamic standards, this is designed to facilitate social and national interaction.

The sole basis of superiority in Islam is piety—the earnestness with which one leads a God-fearing life.

The sole basis of superiority in Islam is piety—the earnestness with which one leads a God-fearing life. Physical attributes certainly have their effect on the social interaction of this world, but in the Hereafter, no value is attached to them. There, the only things which count are inner qualities, for upon them depends the essential excellence of man's distinctive character. That is why, according to a *Hadith*, God sees the heart and not the body. He reserves a place in Paradise only for those found deserving in terms of their inner worth.

According to Islam, all greatness belongs to God. God as the Supreme Being is ineffably superior to all men. While there is this infinitely great difference between God and man, there is no difference whatsoever between man and man. □

NEGATIVE THINKING

Practice of Satan

THE Quran tells us that God gave human beings something that He did not give any other creature—and that is ‘trust’. It is this ‘trust’ that has made man the most honourable of all creatures. By ‘trust’ is meant what is called ‘free-thinking’, or the capacity to think freely and to freely plan one’s actions. The proper fulfilment of this trust placed on man makes him deserving of Paradise, while failure to do so makes him deserving of Hell. (33: 72-73)

In reference to this trust, the above verse of the Quran makes mention of two phenomena—injustice and ignorance. Misuse of our God-given free-will quickly causes us to swerve from the path of justice. It also leads us to stray from the path of wisdom. It is this deviation that makes one deserving of Hell.

If you reflect on the matter seriously, you will realize that for our reform, it is enough if we do not stray from our inherent nature. If you exercise self-control and do not deviate from the path of nature, nature will itself become your guide. Deviation from nature leads one to doom and destruction, while remaining firm on one’s nature makes one successful.

We are in this world as a test—and the test is to see if we opt for the right choice in every situation and save ourselves from a wrong choice. This question of right and wrong choice relates both to our thoughts and to our actions.

If you exercise self-control and do not deviate from the path of nature, nature will itself become your guide.

An example of opting for the right choice in terms of thought is that of the angels at the beginning of creation. Whereas an example of making a wrong choice is seen in the conduct of Satan at that time. When the angels were told to prostrate before man, they did so. In contrast, Satan did not agree to this. He expressed his opposition to man being given the charge of earth. This objection was

an example of ‘selective thinking’. *Iblis* or Satan was the leader of the *jinnns*. God had given the charge of the entire universe to the *jinnns*. This was much more than what He had bestowed to man. However, *Iblis* overlooked this aspect and protested against man being given control of the earth.

This wrong way of thinking is seen throughout the whole of human history. More than 99% of people are stuck in negative or 'selective thinking'. They ignore the many things they have and make a big hue and cry of the things they don't have and are obsessed about them.

Muslims are no exception in this regard. Today, Muslims across the world have access to the best of opportunities, in the same way as other people have. But, in line with the law of nature, there are some things that Muslims (like others) have not been given. Muslims are constantly obsessed only about these things, while they completely ignore the many things that they have been given. As a result, all over the world, Muslims are stuck in a whirlpool of negative thinking. Because of this, they are bereft of gratitude—and gratitude is the highest form of worship for man.

Ignoring and not being grateful for the many things one has received and lamenting about the few things which are not there is a very wrong thing to do. It is against divine principles. People who think in this way cannot hope to develop a positive personality. And being deprived of a positive personality means being deprived of God's blessings. □



The Power of unity

The wind carries away the scattered particles of sand, causing them to float all around. But when these particles of sand join together to make a mountain, no tempest is strong enough to shake them.

LOVE OF GOD

For True Spirituality

But those who believe, love God most. (THE QURAN 2: 165)

ONE of the basic qualities of the believers is mentioned in the Quran as 'those who love God most'. Believers means realized souls. Any person who has realized God at the level of discovery, becomes a realized soul whose emotions are centered on God. God becomes the only focus of his heart and mind.

Man due to his limitations cannot see God in this present world, but he experiences the blessings of God every moment, and these experiences are the real source of love of God. Whatever man has in this world is God's blessing. The more a man ponders over these blessings, the more his love increases for God. The fountain of love for God is the discovery of God's blessings and not the glimpse of the Giver of bounties.

It is God who created man and gifted him with great potentials. God created this earth, an exceptional planet, and sustained it with a life support system. It is God who arranged the fulfillment of man's necessities and gave him a mind which encompasses the entire universe, while remaining on earth.

Any person who has realized God at the level of discovery, becomes a realized soul whose emotions are centered on to God.

Discovering the Giver of all these gifts is called realization. If this realization is attained by a person in its true form, a fountain of love for God springs within him. His heart is enlightened with the love of God. Obedience to God is without doubt an aspect of belief, but it is an underestimation of love for God that it has to be taken only in the sense of

obedience. Obedience is a legal expression, whereas love means man's entire existence being deeply involved in the remembrance of God and to acknowledge God with his whole being—heart and soul. This is God realization. □



THE POSSIBLE AND THE IMPOSSIBLE

Know the Difference

WHETHER or not they show or admit it, almost every person harbours some sorrow deep inside. There is just one reason for this—and that is because people are not realistic enough. Generally speaking, people are unaware of the fact that in this world, you can only get what is possible according to the law of nature. They do not know that they simply cannot get what, in line with the law of nature, is simply not possible for them to acquire.

Because of unawareness of this basic fact, people repeatedly make the blunder of failing to distinguish between what is possible and what is not. They constantly hanker after acquiring things that they simply cannot acquire, come what may. If they realized this blunder that they are making and plan their life accordingly, they would be able to lead far more successful and meaningful lives.

Our first task is to discover that the universe is functioning on the basis of the law of nature that has been established by the Creator. This law is not going to be changed for anyone's sake. Hence, we need to learn about the law of nature and then mould our lives in line with it. If we fail to do so, it is simply impossible to succeed in life.

We need to learn about the law of nature and then mould our lives in line with it. If we fail to do this, it is simply impossible to succeed in life.

“Politics”, it is said, “is the art of the possible”. But this principle applies not to politics alone. It actually applies to every aspect of life. If you make your goal something that, according to the law of nature, you are never going to get, you are bound to fail. On the other hand, if you plan your life within the boundaries of what is possible, you are much more likely to succeed. □

Not by Miracles

Success is the result of devotion and assiduity, and is never the result of some unasked for miracle.

WESTERN AGENDA

False Propaganda

PRESENT-DAY Muslim scholars and intellectuals generally think that the West has a certain agenda *vis-a-vis* the 'Islamic world', and that it is pursuing that agenda with full force. To cite just one example to illustrate this point, consider a comment by one of the Muslim speakers in a conference on the theme, 'Is Islam a Threat to the West?' At this conference, he commented that many Muslim intellectuals stress that while Muslims would like to benefit from the positive things the West has to offer, they do not want to accept its negative things. In response to this statement, some Westerners amongst the conference participants said that the West was not willing to permit Muslims to benefit from its technology, culture and civilizations on these conditions. They were of the opinion that all of these came as a complete package, which Muslims had to either fully accept or fully reject. They did not have the option to pick and choose as they pleased.

The comments of the Muslims are a product of lack of awareness of the modern age. In this regard, the modern mindset is what is reflected in this adage about America: *'The business of America is business.'*

The notion of an 'western agenda' is the product of the Muslim mind. Present-day Muslims have been able to gain nothing positive from it at all. This reflects a miserable intellectual bankruptcy on their part.

The fact of the matter is that the present age is an age of commercialisation. This age was ushered in through modern industrialisation. In this age, almost everything is purchasable if one can pay the price for it. One can buy anything, from a needle to an aeroplane. Without paying the price one cannot get anything at all. There is no 'Western agenda' in this matter. As far as the West is concerned, its only concern is to promote its business to the rest of the world.

Muslims are unaware of the above fact and have acquired only one thing from this unawareness—baseless hatred for the West. Present-day Muslims have been able to gain nothing positive from it at all. This reflects a miserable intellectual bankruptcy on their part.

This bankruptcy of Muslim scholars is ancient. Muslim scholars viewed European colonialism in exactly the same negative manner, and got

unnecessarily stuck in a culture of hatred and violence which they promoted. The fact is that the European communities that spread across Asia and Africa were essentially in search of markets for their products. The other things that came along with them were an additional or secondary aspect of colonialism, and not an essential part of it.

Muslims have had to face a deadly consequence of their shocking lack of awareness of the West. For one thing, because of their negative mindset, they were unable to learn anything from Western culture. Another massive damage that they suffered was their failure to convey the true peaceful message of Islam to the people of the world as a result of their wrongly branding Western peoples as 'enemies'. □



Discover your unique quality

Success is not a gift. It is the result of your own striving. If you want to be a super achiever, first of all you have to recognize your own capabilities. Everyone is born with some unique quality, and success depends upon discovering it and then utilizing it with sound planning.

An advertisement for 'Spirit of Islam Online'. On the left, a laptop is shown with its screen displaying the title 'THE GREATER IQAD' and some text. To the right of the laptop, the text reads: 'NOW ACCESS SPIRIT OF ISLAM ONLINE'. Below this text is a hand cursor icon pointing upwards. Underneath the icon is the website address 'www.spiritofislam.co.in'. At the bottom of the advertisement, it says 'Download ebook at: www.newshunt.com'. The entire advertisement is set against a dark gray background with white text and a light gray laptop.

FUNERAL SERVICE

Trigger Your Mind

THE following is an account of the funeral service of a dead person. The man's body was washed, and he was wrapped up in a new sheet. People recited the prayers which they usually do on such occasions, and then they lifted the corpse on their shoulders and headed to the empty grave. They lowered the body, with great respect, into the ground and covered it with mud.

Witnessing such a scene could give rise to the question, "Why has Islam ordained such honourable treatment for a dead body?"

It is a fact that after death, a human body is nothing more than dust. But it is treated like a human being. Treating 'dust' as one would treat a 'human being' is a commandment directed not at the dead body. It has significance for those who are still alive. Through a dead person an important lesson is conveyed to living people—that they, too, will meet precisely the same fate one day. A man who was a living being like any

of them is now dead and lies perfectly still. The value as a live person he commanded in people's eyes has suddenly been completely ceased. God uses this event to convey a lesson about life to others.

In this way, the living can see themselves in the form of the dead. They can experience death before death arrives.

With great care, people wash and clean and clothe a corpse and carry it to the grave that awaits it. And when they lower the corpse into

the grave, they are to remind themselves the words from the Quran where God reveals to them that,

From the earth We have created you, And We return you to it,
and from it We shall bring you forth a second time.

Thus the funeral service reminds us of the reality and of our final destination. □

Every death gives us a message. Despite our efforts and actions, one day we will find ourselves in the grave.



THE WORD OF GOD

From The Scriptures

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

Translated from Arabic and commentary
by **Maulana Wahiduddin Khan**

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

By the winds sent forth in swift succession, and then storming on with a tempest's force, and the rain-spreading winds, separating one from another, by those who bring down the reminder, to excuse some and warn others: that which you have been promised shall be fulfilled.

(77: 1-7)

Vapour rises from the surface of the sea. This rises in the atmosphere and forms clouds. The winds take these clouds from one place to another. Leaving some places dry, they shower rain at other places, causing freshness and the growth of greenery. This shows that the system of this world is based on the principle of differentiating between things as well as people. The manifestation of this principle is only partially evident in the present world, but in the Hereafter it will take a perfect shape.

This nature of the winds is a sort of reminder for man. Them being a mercy to some and bringing harm to others is to remind us of the fact that, as there are these two different types of people in the present world, God's verdict in respect of these two types of people will also appear in two different results in the next world.

When the stars lose their light, and when the sky is rent asunder, and when the mountains crumble into dust and when the messengers are brought together at the appointed time—for what Day has this been appointed? For the Day of Decision. What will explain to you what the Day of Judgement is? Woe on that Day to those who reject the truth. Did We not destroy the earlier peoples? We will now cause the later ones to follow them: thus do We deal with the culprits. Woe on that Day to those who reject the truth! (77: 8-19)

When Doomsday comes, the present system of the world will be thrown into disarray. Those who consider themselves strong in the present world—and on that basis ignore the call for Truth, will find that there is nobody weaker than they.

Did We not create you from a humble fluid, then placed it in a secure repository [the womb], for an appointed term? Thus We have determined the stages of development and Our power to determine is excellent indeed. Woe on that Day to those who reject the truth! Have We not made the earth a receptacle, for the living and the dead? Have We not placed high mountains upon it and given you fresh water to drink? Woe on that Day to those who reject the truth! (77: 20-28)

The system of the present world has been so formulated that one who ponders over it sees the Hereafter in its mirror. So, there is no criminal worse than one who denies the Truth in spite of the above-mentioned scenario.

Proceed to that which you denied. Proceed to a shadow rising in three columns: affording neither shade, nor protection from the flames, and throwing up sparks as huge as towers and as bright as a herd of yellow camels. Woe on that Day to those who reject the truth! On that Day they will be speechless, nor shall they be permitted to offer excuses. Woe on that Day to those who reject the truth! This is the Day of Judgement. We have assembled you all together with past generations. If now you have any strategy, use it against Me. Woe on that Day to those who reject the truth! (77: 29-40)

When a man is confronted with the horrors of the Hereafter, he will find himself helpless. At that time, those who were used to speaking in inexhaustible vocabularies in this world will be rendered speechless. □



DESIRE

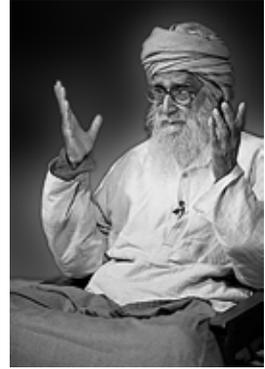
*Desire can serve as a motive force.
But mindless yielding to desire
will lead to disaster.*

ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

DISCUSSION WITH MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN ON 'GLOBALISATION'.

Some people are critical of 'globalisation', citing evidence to show that it is causing rapidly increasing economic inequalities. Globalisation helps multinational corporations become even wealthier, while driving small businesses out of competition, resulting in massive poverty and unemployment. How do you see this?



There are two aspects of globalisation that one needs to consider here. The first is inequality. Inequality does exist, but it is a natural phenomenon. The fact is that inequality is and will remain part of every system. This is because according to the law of nature inequality creates competition and challenges, which, in turn, lead to progress.

A second aspect that needs to be considered is that opportunities have increased manifold because of it. As a result, there has come about what can be called the phenomenon of 'de-monopolization', which means that many more people now have the chance to avail of opportunities.

Critics of globalisation generally focus on only one aspect of the phenomenon and ignore others. What they consider as the minus point is not due to globalisation *per se*, but, due to the law of nature. Misinterpretation of the law of nature has made the critics unable to understand and acknowledge the positive aspects of globalisation.

It is important to bear in mind that inequality is part of nature and not something unique to globalisation as such. It is true that the magnitude or extent of inequality has increased because of it, but one must also remember that the quantum of opportunities has also increased. Further, one should remember that this inequality is not a permanent or absolute feature of globalisation. There are numerous cases of people who hardly possessed any material wealth initially, and who have worked hard and prospered as a result, availing of the new opportunities opened up by globalisation. One should also note that the opportunities that have accompanied it are an integral feature of the phenomenon of globalisation.

Some people who are critical of globalisation point out that it is increasing consumerism and materialism among people, resulting in spiritual impoverishment, because it is driven essentially by materialistic concerns. Do you agree? Do you think this has to be this way or can globalisation also be a means for promoting spiritual consciousness?

I am also living in the age of globalisation, but I am completely a spiritual person. This shows that no situation creates a compulsion. You don't have to behave in a certain way if you don't want to. It is up to the individual concerned to allow himself to be influenced by the situation he or she is faced with. Suppose there was no globalisation—that would not necessarily guarantee spirituality. One can be spiritual while living in a materialistic environment. At the same time, one can be non-spiritual in an environment which is not materialistic.

You speak of God managing history. You talk of God's role in history. In which way do you think globalisation might reflect God's working in human history? Or do you think globalisation goes against God's plan for humanity?

Globalisation is very much in accordance with divine culture. This is because for the past thousands of years, the divine message had remained restricted to the local level. Globalisation made it possible to disseminate the divine message to people at a global level through various means. Thus, globalisation is in accordance with the divine scheme of things.

Some people say that globalisation is resulting in the destruction of non-Western cultures because it is linked to the spread of the Western (or American) culture—a culture of what they see as reflecting unbridled individualism, consumerism and hedonism. So, they say that globalisation is a threat not just economically to the non-Western world, especially to the poor, but also culturally and that it is causing what they call 'Western cultural imperialism' and the destruction of non-Western cultures. What are your views about this?

This statement is quite illogical. What you allude to is not a phenomenon of Western culture as such, but, reflects the fact that challenge is an integral part of human life. Western culture offers a challenge to non-Western people, because of which people in the non-West have been encouraged to rethink many things and to become more creative.

We should welcome globalisation. We should see it as part of a historical advancement. If we find anything unwanted in this phenomenon, we

should attribute it to the law of nature. Everything in nature has both positive and negative aspects. For example, modern democracy is a boon, but at the same time it has aspects that some people regard as objectionable.

Globalisation is a phase of a historical process. This historical process will carry on and cannot come to a halt through a person or group's opposition or resistance. All we need to do in this new age is to avail of the opportunities that have been brought about as a result of globalisation.

Do you think it is possible to think of a different sort of globalisation from the one that we have at present? If so, what would its distinctive features be? And what might be a realistic way to promote this alternate globalisation?

It is unrealistic to ask for an alternative. There is no alternative to globalisation as it is not the creation of any person. It is the culmination of a long process of history. Only another historical process can change the current state of affairs to bring into effect another phenomenon. If, for the sake of argument, an alternative to globalisation is created, even then there will be people who will find that it has problems. We have to accept that there would always be problems, and at the same time recognize there will always be opportunities. Therefore, singling out problems and initiating a movement of resistance is not the way of wisdom. One should ignore the problems and focus on availing the existing opportunities. □

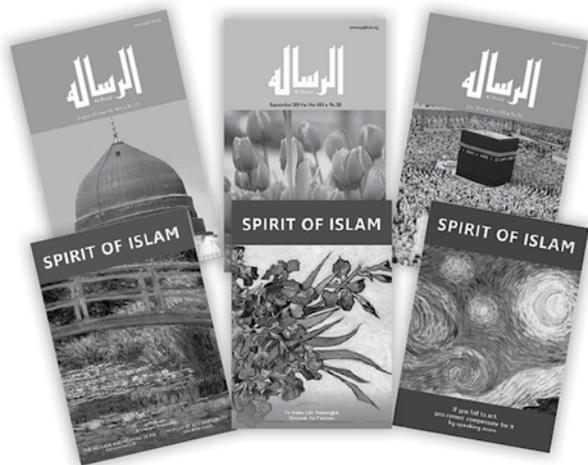


Proving Oneself

When a person suffers a loss, he should not consider himself a failure and a deprived person; he should not lose hope and courage, and begin uttering endless complaints. He must prove his courage and bearing up under the burden of adversity, retain his mental balance.

Towards Spiritual Living

Al-Risala and Spirit of Islam are two monthly spiritual magazines. They aim at helping individuals discover for themselves answers to their questions on spirituality, religion, this life and the life beyond, and also instill in them the spirit of dawah work.



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