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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



Maturity is the ability to live in peace
with the things we cannot change.

A MAGAZINE FOR THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

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- ▶ Presents Islam, the religion of nature, in the contemporary idiom to help Muslims rediscover Islam from the original sources
- ▶ Explains Creation plan of God for humankind
- ▶ Enlightens people on the subject of global peace
- ▶ Addresses contemporary issues
- ▶ Assists the readers to deal with life's challenges
- ▶ Offers Spirituality to a wider circle of spiritual seekers
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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

ISSUE 94 OCTOBER 2020

CHIEF EDITOR

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN
www.facebook.com/maulanawkhan

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

PROF. FARIDA KHANAM

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

DR. NAGHMA SIDDIQI
MARIA KHAN
PROF. ZAHEERUDDIN
AIJAZ AHMED
MOHAMMAD USMAN

PUBLISHER

FATHIMA SARAH


OFFICE

SPIRIT OF ISLAM
002, HM WIMBERLY, 6, BERLIE STREET CROSS
LANGFORD TOWN, BENGALURU 560025, INDIA

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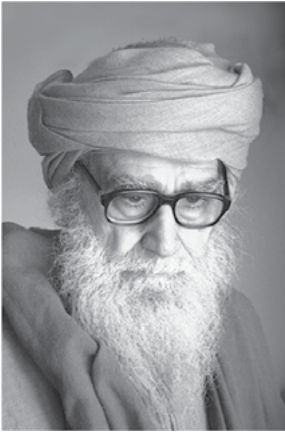
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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.

GLOBAL LIBRARY

PEOPLE write biographies of famous people. But the fact is that every human being is a book. The human beings, taken together, constitute a global library. Every human life is a great book. Every human life is full of events. Every human being has experiences in his life that are not present in other human beings' lives. It is as if everyone carries a whole library with them. Everyone has, within oneself, a complete library. Even if this library is mostly in unwritten form, it is still perfectly preserved in the records of the universe.

On Judgement Day, the written or unwritten books of every human being will be brought into the open. At that time, every human being will know what he has lost in life, and what he has gained, what opportunity he has availed of, and what opportunity he has missed out. This record of life of every human being will be presented to him as a living library. Whether he likes it or not, the record of his entire life will come before him. Man will be compelled to read the book he has written.

1. The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims 2020, Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre, Jordan.

This autobiography of man will be in his own comprehensible language. The most serious aspect of this situation would be that no human being would be in a position to rewrite the story of his life. No one will have the opportunity to write a second edition of their life story. Writing

On Judgement Day, the written or unwritten books of every human being will be brought into the open. At that time, every human being will know what he has lost in life, and what he has gained.

the first edition of one's biography is in the hands of every human being, but preparing a revised edition of this story is beyond anyone's ken. No one will be able to make the desired edition of their biography, which they can read, and give to others to read. This is the destiny of every human being. By all means, every person is going to face this destiny, whether they desire it or abhor it. □

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan
editor@thespiritofislam.org

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(The Times of India)



*God increases
His guidance to
those who follow
guidance.*

The Quran 19: 76

FROM THE EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Prof. Farida Khanam is an author, editor, translator, public speaker and former professor of Islamic Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Among her books are 'A Simple Guide to Sufism' and 'A Study of World's Major Religions'. She has translated into English many books authored by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. Currently the chairperson of CPS International, she is a regular contributor of articles to various publications. Prof. Khanam has edited Maulana's English translation of the Quran and has also translated his Urdu commentary of the Quran into English. She can be reached at hub@thespiritofislam.org

WORLDLY GAIN, SPIRITUAL LOSS

ONCE, I was told by a friend of mine about how well she had done in securing a job with a big company. The job brought her a decent salary. It was good news indeed, but then she also revealed that she had lost interest in her household duties and socializing. She had become preoccupied with her office work. She did not even feel like spending time with her husband and children. All of this information was communicated to me in a matter-of-fact tone. It seemed that this behaviour was expected of her and quite normal. Her mind had become so tuned to her office work that she had stopped missing her social activities.

This made me think about the willingness of people to become so totally absorbed in mundane activities for a lucrative monthly salary. Here was someone who was prepared to put her heart and soul into her work, to set all other loyalties aside, to become immersed in it to the exclusion of all other considerations. What could be the reason for this great change? It was due to the expectation of financial gain that the salary would provide. For spending a few hours in office, people mould their entire lives accordingly. Even when they know that around 10-12 years of their life on an average is spent on a job—people consider it necessary to undertake such jobs whilst sacrificing many other interests.

All around us we find examples of such people, engrossed body and soul in their work, devoted to the banalities of commerce. Ask anyone of them to help in God's cause, and you will be met with indifference or, at best with half-heartedness. There will be no zeal and dedication

for this work. And whatever little help is offered in terms of effort or money will be regarded by the donor as more than enough. There will be no parallel with the lady who is not satisfied just by working at her office, and who continues to be preoccupied by her work even at home. There will be no show of the kind of interest which develops when one is wholeheartedly devoted to the task at hand.

Why is there such lack of fervour for spiritual goals? This seems very strange when we all know that the rewards God has promised for working for His cause are hundreds of thousands of times higher than worldly rewards for everyday tasks. Even a single moment spent in this world on furthering God's cause is valued at much more than one month's salary. Then why do people fail to show comparable seriousness and devotion in purely spiritual matters? The answer is perhaps not far to seek. Worldly returns bring immediate and obvious benefits. It requires no special perceptiveness to grasp this. But, to understand the rewards to be gained in the Hereafter, one needs to have patience, wisdom, and above all, insight.

People only pay lip service to their belief in God and the Hereafter, for all their attention is focused on this world and its gains.

People only pay lip service to their belief in God and the Hereafter, for all their attention is focused on this world and its gains. That is why they are all too willing to devote themselves to any job in this world which will bring them a few thousand rupees, regardless of the fact that this may cause them to lose the limitless 'thousands' of the world to come. □

Prof. Farida Khanam
hub@thespiritofislam.org



Don't Take Things As Evil.
Face Them As Challenges.



FAITH AND POLITICS

Essential and Relative Aspects of Religion

THE teachings of Islam can be broadly divided into two parts—the first part is related to belief which is eternal in nature, and the other part deals with those aspects which depend on the circumstances. By its very nature, this second part is subject to change and modification. Teachings about belief are a fundamental part of religion, while those teachings that change with circumstances are a relative part of religion.

Faith includes belief in monotheism, the concept of prophethood and accountability in the Hereafter. It also includes rituals of worship. Teachings which change with circumstance include politics and governance. Belief and worship are eternal. Their importance in religion is permanent. But so far as politics and government are concerned, the matter is different. The structure of government and emphasis on politics will change according to the circumstances.

Islam has not made politics an article of faith. That is why it is forbidden (*haram*) to revolt against an established government in Islam. Islam teaches that when a government is established, no one should take rebellious action against it, but rather work in non-political spheres, such as calling people to God, education and reform, while maintaining a good relationship with the government of the day.

Islam teaches that when a government is established, no one should take rebellious action against it, but rather work in non-political spheres, such as calling people to God, education and reform.

This is why there is no specific rule for the appointment of a caliph in Islam. There is no explicit guidance in the Quran in this matter. The early history of Islam is considered as a standard of reference for future. During this period, five caliphs became known as the Rightly-guided Caliphs. They were Abu Bakr, Umar Farooq, Uthman ibn Affan, Ali ibn Abi Talib and Umar ibn Abdul Aziz.

As history suggests, each of these caliphs was appointed through quite different methods. This is an unambiguous proof that there is no definitive procedure for the appointment of the head of political institutions in Islam. In contrast, every political constitution in the world contains clear and comprehensive guidance on such matters.

God is the greatest concern of Islam. The greatest goal, according to Islam, is that a person should become a true worshipper of God. He should practise high morals. At the same time, he should convey God's message to people. He should communicate the spiritual teachings of Islam to people in a purely non-political manner. He should prove to be beneficial to society in spheres such as reform and education.

God is the greatest concern of Islam. The greatest goal, according to Islam, is that a person should become a true worshipper of God. He should practise high morals. At the same time, he should convey God's message to people.

The establishment of political power is not the target of Islam. According to the Quran, granting of political power is a matter of putting man to the test, just as wealth is a means of testing a person. Wealth and riches are tests for human beings, which is why wealth keeps changing hands, because God has to test every human being. If wealth is permanently given to a single individual or group, then other people cannot be tested. Putting wealth in someone's possession permanently is contrary to God's creation plan.

Same is true of political power. Political power is also a test paper. Political power is given to someone to see how he behaves after gaining power. Precisely for this reason, political power does not rest in the hands of one individual or a group, but rather it keeps circulating among different people. This principle is explained in these words in the Quran: 'We bring these days to men by turns.' (3: 140)

The fact that political power in Islam is not an absolute requirement is not a shortcoming. It is a very important principle for the welfare of human beings. All major conflicts among people arise out of the struggle to grab political power. Therefore, Islam has adopted the principle of status quoism in the matter of political power. The benefit of this principle is that peace prevails in society. People should be occupied with the work of reform and construction instead of thinking of war and violence. □



FLAWED IDEALS

Disillusionment with Humanity

PHILIP JOHN BAYER, the founder of Quaker State Refining Company, was one of America's big business magnates. Eleanor Ritchey, the unmarried granddaughter of Philip John, inherited an enormous sum of money and other valuables as her inheritance.

But she hated human beings, and chose to remain single all her life. She died on October 14, 1968, at the age of 58.

Having no human beings as her companions, she developed curious habits in pursuit of pleasure. For example, she would buy innumerable pairs of shoes, since she never wore a pair of shoes more than once. Similarly, she would buy stationery boxes with astonishing frequency, to mention but a few of her idiosyncrasies. She donated 1,707 pairs of shoes and 1,224 boxes of stationery to the Salvation Army.

Many lives are wasted because they are misdirected. No real ethical fulfilment is possible without a balanced set of humane ideals.

Stranger still was her interest in dogs. Whenever she went out in her car, she would pick up stray dogs on the street, bring them home and look after them with special care. In this manner she collected about 150 dogs. When her home could no longer accommodate such a huge pack of dogs, she initially bought a 12-acre piece of land to ensure their comfort.

In her will, she had it mentioned that all her wealth should go to her pet dogs. Only after they had all died, was it to be transferred to the Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine. The June 6, 1984 issue of *The New York Times* carried the news that the last surviving member of the pack, Musketeer, had died. It was 13-year-old, and had become so weak that when it walked, its legs trembled, and while coughing it fell to the ground.

Even the bequeathing of her wealth, although altruistic in purpose, was marked by eccentricity, and was obviously the offshoot of a flawed idealism. How much better it would have been if her efforts had been equally directed towards the betterment of human beings. Without a sound set of ideals, humanity had become less than nothing for her, and her energies were frittered away in senseless phobias. How many lives are thus wasted, because, they are misdirected? No real ethical fulfilment is possible without a balanced set of humane ideals. □

THE UNERASABLE PAST

No Escape from the Consequences

TONY BENN (d. 2014), a British Labour MP, was once dissatisfied with the way an interview for a BBC radio programme was developing and, determined that no part of the dialogue between himself and the reporter should be broadcast. He took steps to erase it from the tape which had been recording it. To the reporter's astonishment, he reached into a cupboard and produced a powerful electromagnet which he duly plugged in and waved over the tape, thereby completely removing all traces of the conversation which had just taken place.

When one is caught in a difficult situation in this world, there is generally some way or other which allows one to escape from it. One can, for example, have 'a clean record' simply by erasing embarrassing or incriminating statements from a tape. It is just as if, originally, one had never uttered a word. Similarly, one can find loopholes in the law that permit one to escape justice and to proceed in life as if one had never erred in any material or moral sense. All kinds of evasive tactics can, indeed, be practised so that a life of sin, immorality, and crime can be completely whitewashed; that all the ugliness of corruption is thus effectively hidden from the public eye.

In the next world, there is no question of erasures, evasion, whitewashing and all the other tactics resorted to by wrongdoers. No novel hi-tech gadgetry will be available to assist in the concealment of the truth.

In the next world, however, there is no question of erasures, evasion, whitewashing and all the other tactics resorted to by wrongdoers. No novel hi-tech gadgetry will be available to assist in the concealment of the truth. Neither technology nor a clever lawyer nor the intervention of friends and relatives will be of any avail in the afterlife where it is impossible either to practise deception or to wipe out the events of the past. Everything

that has happened is already there on God's cosmic tape recorder. Search as one may, one will never find any instrument which will erase what is indelibly recorded on God's tape.

Because, in many cases, our evasive tactics are successful in this world, we tend to imagine that the same will hold true of the next world. But the next world is one which is concerned only with realities. □

JOURNEY THROUGH THE DARK

Addressing the Issue of Suicide

ALMOST every day, there are reports of people committing suicide all around the globe. Close to 800,000 people die by suicide every year. The primary cause of suicides is linked to stress and depression although other reasons reported include failure and loss, phobias, frustration, conflict with others, violence, loneliness, abuse, discrimination, a relationship break-up, financial problems, chronic pain and illness, etc.

Even many acclaimed and Successful people have taken their lives out of sheer frustration and depression. Earnest Hemingway, the Nobel Prize-winning author committed suicide in 1961. Arthur Koestler, the famous British writer and thinker, committed suicide along with his wife, Cynthia, in his London home in March 1983. At the time of his death, he was 77 years of age.

Why should a man who had everything that one could wish for in this world commit suicide? Mr Koestler had won renown as a scholar and writer, and had acquired sufficient wealth to leave £400,000 to a British University for research in parapsychology. The reason for his suicide was his overwhelming sense of horror and frustration at the evil being perpetrated in the world all around him—feelings which were reflected in the many books he wrote. In his famous *Darkness at Noon* (published in 32 languages), he excoriates the so-called ‘people’s system of the Soviet Union, which perpetuates all the cruelty and exploitation which it was supposed to eradicate.’

In a collection of his discourses published in 1974, he puts his finger on the crux of the matter: “There is a striking, symptomatic disparity between the growth curves of technological achievement on the one hand and of ethical behaviour on the other.” He subsequently expresses his disillusionment with modern civilization when he writes: “We can control the motions of the satellites orbiting distant planets, but we cannot control the situation in Northern Ireland.”

Leo Tolstoy (d. 1910), regarded as one of the greatest authors of all time, considered suicide the only option for him at the time when he was considered as a completely happy and successful man. He writes about his views quite graphically on this issue.

“My question, the question that had brought me to the edge of suicide when I was fifty years old, was the simplest question lying in the soul

of every human being, from a silly child to the wisest of the elders, the question without which life is impossible; such was the way I felt about the matter. The question is this: What will come of what I do today and tomorrow? What will become of my entire life?"

"Expressed differently, the question may be: Why should I live? Why should I wish for anything or do anything? Or to put it still differently: Is there any meaning in my life that will not be destroyed by my inevitably approaching death?" (*Confessions*)

Life cannot but appear meaningless to a person who has no conception of the afterlife. The significance of the present world can be understood only in the context of our present life being followed by the Hereafter.

Failing to find a convincing answer to this question, he says:

"I grew sick of life; some irresistible force was leading me to somehow get rid of it. It was not that I wanted to kill myself. The force that was leading me away from life was more powerful, more absolute, more all-encompassing than any desire. With all my strength I struggled to get away from life. The thought of suicide came to me as naturally then as the thought of improving life had come to me before." (*Ibid.*)

Tolstoy was so driven to commit suicide that he had to take tremendous efforts to avoid

committing this act.

"And there I was, a fortunate man, carrying a rope from my room, where I was alone every night as I undressed, so that I would not hang myself from the beam between the closets. And I quit going hunting with a gun, so that I would not be too easily tempted to rid myself of life. I myself did not know what I wanted. I was afraid of life; I struggled to get rid of it." (*Ibid.*)

Fatal Disequilibrium

Animals do not kill themselves, but man does commit such act. After weighing up all sides of this question, Arthur Koestler came to the conclusion that in different parts of the human mind, an imbalance had occurred during the process of evolution. It was this imbalance which explained man's killing of man on a stupendous scale.

The researches done by Koestler, however, did not bring him any peace. His final philosophy was that the best thing for man in modern circumstances was to commit suicide: "Death could be a welcome

and natural relief for someone whose only alternative was pain and suffering." (*The Guardian*, London, March 13, 1983)

Applying this theory to his own life, Arthur Koestler separated himself from a world which was not of his own making and which he did not have the power to change. He saw that man opened his eyes in a world of brightness only to enter the dark realms of death. He saw that despite extraordinary progress in technology, the moral progress of humankind was still to be attained. Man could control satellites, but man could not control man. Animals never killed their own species, but human beings were eternally plotting the death of their fellow-men. He could see that man planned to reform defective systems of living by making the optional use of human and physical resources, communism being one such attempt, but such 'reforms' had proved abortive, bringing more darkness than light to the human situation. Frustrated beyond measure by these glaring defects in human existences, Koestler committed suicide.

No amount of worldly success gives one fulfilment. Everyone wants more, but everyone achieves less. This is the reason for lack of fulfilment and consequent depression. Man, by nature, wants eternal life and total fulfilment. He wants to live in a perfect world and enjoy being in the ideal situation. But the planet Earth is a limited world, while what man desires can be achieved only in an unlimited world which lies in the world Hereafter.

Life cannot but appear meaningless to a person who has no conception of the afterlife. The significance of the present world can be understood only in the context of our present life being followed by the Hereafter. Unless this notion is ever-present in the human consciousness, a descent into negativism is inevitable. In the face of an inexplicably hostile world, such shocking incidents of the more sensitive souls being pushed irrevocably towards suicide will keep coming to the fore. □



SHARING THE REWARDS

Participate in Spirit

IN the year CE 630, the Prophet led a military expedition to Tabuk. Some Muslims had valid excuses precluding their participation in this expedition. With regard to them, this verse of the Quran was revealed:

‘No blame shall attach to the weak, the sick, and those who have no means to spend, provided they are sincere to God and His Messenger. There is no reason to reproach those who do good deeds; God is most forgiving and merciful. Nor [does any blame] attach to those who came to you to be provided with mounts, and when you said, ‘I can find no mounts for you,’ they went back, and tears welled up in their eyes with sadness, since they could not find any way to contribute.’ (9: 91-92)

According to the Prophet’s earliest biographer, Ibn Ishaq (d. CE 767), these were seven individuals belonging to the *Ansar* (Muslims of Madinah). After the Prophet had set out on the expedition, he referred to them in the presence of his Companions. ‘Do you know,’ he said to them, ‘you have left some people behind in Madinah who will share with you the reward of everything you have spent, every valley you have crossed and every victory you have gained over the enemy.’ ‘Even though they remain in Madinah?’ Asked the Companions. ‘Yes,’ replied the Prophet. ‘They had valid reasons for staying behind.’

This goes to show that a person, even when not in a position to contribute, can gain a share in the reward of those who have striven for a cause. While appearing to have achieved nothing, he can join the ranks of those who have achieved much. How can this be? The way to accomplish this is for us to participate in spirit in those actions in which we are unable to take an active, physical part. For example, if we see another person more capable than we are, rather than being jealous of him, we should acknowledge his superiority. Thus, we shall have a share in the reward for anything that he does, which it is beyond us to accomplish. If someone is wealthier than us, it should be our heart’s wish that God grant them the grace to be truly thankful for their wealth, and spend it rightly. When they do so, we shall have a share in their reward. If we see someone in an influential position, while ourselves remaining among the anonymous masses, we can pray for them thus: ‘Lord, may they use their influence in the service of truth, not in the service of falsehood’. ◻

STRIKING A BALANCE

Religion and Worldly Demands

BELIEVERS! When the call to prayer is made on the day of congregation, hasten to the remembrance of God, and leave all worldly commerce: this is for your own good, if you but knew it. When the prayer is ended, disperse in the land and seek to obtain [something] of God's bounty; and remember God much, so that you may prosper. Yet when they see some merchandise or entertainment, they break away to go to it and leave you standing. Say, 'That which God has in store is far better than any merchandise or entertainment.' God is the most munificent Giver. (62: 9-11)

These verses from the *Surah al-Jumu'ah* (The Day of Congregation) tell us in brief how to maintain a balance between the twin demands of God-oriented life and our economic activities.

Economic activity is a natural requirement of human existence. That is why Islam gives full freedom in this matter. However, it is essential that economic activities be subordinated to religious obligations. Therefore, although everyone is free to engage in economic activities, he must fulfil certain conditions.

1. Earning from economic activities should be considered a blessing of God.
2. God should be constantly remembered during one's economic activities.
3. Economic activities should not be allowed to cross the limits imposed by God.

People should strike a balance between economic activities and demands of religion by remaining prepared always, so that whenever they receive a call of religion, they must give preference to the demands of religion over the economic necessity. These demands include one's own intellectual development, dissemination of the word of God and contributing positively towards society. After having fulfilled their religious duties, they will then have every right to return once again to economic activities.

Islam is a religion of nature. and must be understood from its original sources—the Quran and the life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad. While giving out religious commands, it takes into full account the worldly needs of a human being. Islam does not put human beings under undue stress. It is mentioned in the Quran thus: 'God does not charge a soul with more than it can bear.' (2: 286) □

THE NECESSITY OF PRETREATMENT

Before the Action Begins

TEXTILE pretreatment is described as the series of cleaning operations performed on the yarn or the cloth. Impurities that cause adverse effects during dyeing and printing are removed through the process of pretreatment. A term associated with the textile industry, pretreatment describes the process to which cloth is subjected before it can take further processing.

Pretreatment processes include desizing, scouring, and bleaching of fabrics. In cotton, pretreatment is carried out in order to remove any inherent or added matter present in it, thereby improving its absorbency and whiteness. Mercerization is another such process that imparts properties of cotton, namely fibre strength and shrinkage resistance. It also enhances the accessibility and reactivity of cotton cellulose.

If we want our efforts to bear fruit, it is essential that we should take the correct preliminary steps before plunging headlong into difficult situations. Without the necessary moral preparation, all our steps will go awry, just like a cloth which is dyed without pretreatment.

These pretreatments, therefore, play a major role in subsequent dyeing, printing and finishing. In fact, it has been reported that 70 percent of all the defects occurring in dyed-finished fabrics may be attributed to the imperfect preparation of the base fabric.

This principle of pretreatment is as integral and necessary in human affairs as it is in clothes. If we want our efforts to bear fruit, it is essential that we should take the correct preliminary steps before plunging headlong into difficult situations. Without the necessary moral preparation, all our steps will go awry, just like a cloth which is dyed without pretreatment.

If journalism of decent standards is to thrive, it is essential that there should be industries to feed it. Independent journalism thrives and prospers when backed by industries. Thus, industrial backing is the pretreatment for the emergence of quality journalism.

To concretize the power of votes in elections, unity is the first prerequisite. Without the pretreatment of electoral unity, voting power will be divided and it will fail to become a genuine political power capable of serving true social ends.

Similarly, before taking steps of any social consequence, it is necessary that there be a leader who is respected by the majority. Attempting to take initiatives without a central leadership is like leaping into an abyss. Central leadership is the prerequisite for the success of positive social movement.

The need for initial preparation is present in every walk of life, in private affairs as well as in public life. Those who seek to achieve high ideals, but do not wish to go through the tedium of doing extensive groundwork first, are building sandcastles which will not be able to stand the test of time. Their ambitions are no more than flights of fantasy which will never get off the ground in the world of hard realities.

The characteristics possessed by cotton and the cloth made from it have been directly invested in them by God. The physical rules governing them are, therefore, universal and invariable, and it is only by accepting them as such that man can take the right steps in order to make the clothes of his choice. In this, God gives us a clear sign as to how we should construct our lives. That is, we cannot jump to the later, more refined stages, without going through all the processes of pretreatment. It is only when the initial conditions have been fulfilled that we can proceed to the next stage to achieve the desired success. One can never satisfactorily reach the destination without passing through and giving due attention to all of the preliminary stages. □



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PRICE OF UNITY

Sacrifice Your Opinion

IN the days of the Prophet, Madinah was a natural fortress. To the south were densely clustered date-palm groves and to the east and west were high mountains which presented natural barriers to any would-be invader. There was, therefore, only one front from where the city needed to be defended. When news reached the Prophet in CE 624 that the Quraysh were advancing in great strength towards the city, he summoned his Companions so that their immediate strategy could be discussed. Most of the Companions favoured resistance to the attack from within the city, because of the obvious geographical advantages. But the younger members were of the view that if they did not rally forth to do battle outside the city, the enemy would perceive this as a sign of weakness and cowardice.

Though Abdullah ibn Ubayy and most of the senior Companions were in favour of meeting the attack from within the city, the Prophet decided to accede to the wishes of the younger Muslims. Accordingly, he set forth with an army of one thousand for Uhud. Abdullah ibn Ubayy, who felt that the advice he had given was wise and proper, felt deeply offended that it had been summarily rejected, and it was with a heavy heart that he accompanied the Muslim army. However, before they reached Uhud, he turned back along with his 300 followers on the grounds that since the Prophet had agreed with the others and not with him, he saw no reason to go to his death on the field of battle. (*Biography of the Prophet* by Ibn Hisham)

Subsequent events—heavy losses for Muslims and ultimate defeat at Uhud—proved him correct, but his disobedience was seen as a form of transgression. It brought down upon him the wrath of God and earned him the ignominious title of ‘Leader of the Hypocrites’.

Although Islam attaches great importance to consultation, in the last analysis one course of action can be adopted at any given time, the simultaneous pursuance of several dissimilar courses of action being a logical impossibility. Everyone, of course, is considered to have the right to put forward their point of view, but since prolonged wrangling produces nothing but chaos, a stage should come when the path is cleared for action. The true Muslim should, therefore, state his views, but be prepared to follow the directives of those at the helm of affairs, whether or not they are in consonance with his own opinions. He must bear it ever in mind that no strong society has ever grown out of disunity. □

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SUCCESS

Physical Strength Alone is not Enough

WHEN compared with the losers or below par performing sportspersons, champions often possess equal physical strength and capabilities. Both of these receive training of an almost equal standard. Then why does one win and another lose? This question became a subject of research in America.

The group of researchers chose a few leading international wrestlers and made comparisons of their physical strength and psychological reserves. They found out that there is one marked difference between the winners and the losers in world competitions. This difference was not physical but psychological. It plays the most crucial role in winning or losing a competition. The experts found that the winners were more conscientious and in control of themselves than the losers. The report is summed up with these words:

“Losers tended to be more depressed and confused before competing, while the winners were positive and relaxed.” (*The Times of India*, July 26, 1981). This applies equally to the broader field of life. In life, when two individuals or two groups confront one another, their victory or defeat does not depend so much on material resources as on intellectual and psychological reserves.

When two individuals or two groups confront one another, their victory or defeat does not depend so much on material resources as on intellectual and psychological reserves.

The conviction that one's goals are worthwhile, the observation of discipline with no contradiction between words and thoughts, dispassionate thinking, even in times of crisis—all these are qualities of mind and heart which determine success, and obviate failure in the wider field of life. □



USA

Centre for Peace and Spirituality
2665 Byberry Road, Bensalem, PA 19020
kkaleemuddin@gmail.com

THE SUPERIOR SOLUTION

Patience and Tolerance

PATIENCE, the focus of about 200 verses of the Quran, and referred to indirectly in many others, may be termed the core subject of the scriptures. The verses directly relating to patience are quite explicit in their content. For instance,

Seek help with patience and prayer. (2: 45)

And endure patiently whatever may befall you. (31: 17)

Exhort one another to steadfastness. (103: 3)

Do not yield to those who deny the truth and the hypocrites: ignore their hurtful talk. Put your trust in God. (33: 48)

A very pronounced and direct instruction to behave with patience and endurance is apparent in these verses.

The majority of the other verses are also intensely concerned with patience. The very first verse of the Quran begins with "All praise is due to God." (1: 2) This shows that God expects humankind to express gratitude and admiration to Him. But this is a very trying expectation! We know that this world is full of unpleasant experiences and nobody can be insulated from them. According to the Quran, "We have created man into a life of toil and trial." (90: 4) Indeed, it is not possible for anyone to create a life of absolute bliss for himself.

How then a person can become grateful and appreciative of God's grace in the real sense? The only way to be so is through patience. It is only when a person patiently endures worldly problems that it becomes possible for him to express his feeling of gratefulness to God. It is for this reason that the Quran brackets gratefulness with patience. (31: 31)

Patience makes a person capable of finding a positive and successful solution to every problem. When someone explodes with anger while facing his adversary, he loses the faculty to respond effectively or to think of well-planned action. But when he adheres to patience and tolerance, he finds himself competent to make a rational move instead of an impulsive reaction. History testifies that one who acts on impulses and emotional reactions invariably fails; and one who responds rationally always succeeds. Patience is undoubtedly the superior solution to all problems. □

TRUE GRATITUDE

Appreciate Your Benefactors

THE Prophet of Islam is reported to have said, “One who never expresses his gratitude to other human beings will never be grateful to God.”

Gratefulness is a state of mind which cannot be compartmentalized. If it manifests itself in one place, the chances are that it will do so in other places too. If a man shows gratitude to one person, he will surely show it to others likewise.

When a man does someone a good turn, it is something quite obvious—a tangible direct experience. On the contrary, God’s kindness, being an indirect experience, is not at all obvious. A person has to be perceptive, and reflective in order to recognize the favours God has granted him. While the favours a man does are observable, God’s favours can be realized only by thinking about them.

One who fails to perceive an event which is directly observable cannot be expected to grasp something which can be apprehended only after a great deal of cogitation.

If the recipient of a favour fails to acknowledge it for fear of belittling himself in the eyes of his benefactor, he does himself nothing but harm. It is more a question of being belittled in the eyes of his own conscience than falling down in others’ eyes—a course by far the more injurious.

A person has to be perceptive, and reflective in order to recognize the favours God has granted him.

An even greater disadvantage of an ungrateful attitude is that it produces a mentality of non-acknowledgement. Failing at first to acknowledge the favours of one’s fellow men leads on to failure to give wholehearted credence to the Lord of the universe. There is no greater loss in this world than to have failed to acknowledge one’s Creator. □



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



POSITIVITY: THE FERTILE GROUND FOR GOD-REALIZATION

FOR a plant to grow, fertile land is essential. Only on fertile land will it be possible for a plant to grow into a green tree. Such a development cannot take place on barren land. For a tree to grow, fertile land is indispensable. Fertile land is favourable for the plant while barren land is totally unproductive.

The same is true of *ma'rifah*, or discovery of God (God-realization). *Ma'rifah* can take place only in such a seeker who has a noble personality. One who is not such a seeker cannot attain to *ma'rifah*. He has to have a positive personality. Conversely, an unfavourable personality may be described as a negative personality. One who desires that the orchard of *ma'rifah* should grow within him must turn himself into a positive personality, whatever the cost.

A man with a negative personality is one who is of a reactionary disposition. He succumbs to the influence of his environment. Because of his immature consciousness, he is unable to rise above external circumstances. He cannot form his opinions uninfluenced by external pressures. He will always look at the negative aspects of events.

By the grace of God, one endowed with a positive personality finds the opportunity to think along the right lines, and continues to attain God-realization so that the process of building a spiritual personality is ever ongoing. The attainment of God-realization is possible only on the fertile soil of a positive personality. □

One who desires that the orchard of ma'rifah should grow within him must turn himself into a positive personality, whatever the cost.



WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR FEEDBACK

Dear Readers,

Spirit of Islam team believes in the involvement of readers to enhance the quality of the magazine. Your precious views, suggestions, and recommendations in this regard are earnestly solicited and will be readily acknowledged. Kindly mail us your views at: thecentreforpeace@gmail.com

UPBRINGING OF CHILDREN

Actions Speak Louder than Words

A CERTAIN person had special arrangements made for the training of his children. A Maulvi would come every day to give them religious education, while he himself would urge them to say their prayers regularly. Daily he would spend some time with them to help them memorize the basic Islamic creed *kalima* and the verses of benediction from the Quran. He would attempt to impart to them such moral values as respecting their elders, behaving with propriety towards others and so on.

Nevertheless, when his children grew up, they were no different from the average person who is worldly and clever whenever his own interests are at stake. The reason for their early training having had so little effect was that it had been little better than a form of lip service. It had all been so many empty words—empty, because the role model presented by the father was that of a man of the world. When it came to mere words, he could be described as religious. But when it came to actions, all the aura of religiosity fell away from him. For such a man it was impossible to create a truly religious atmosphere within his own home.

Religious training is not achieved by the uttering of religious words; it calls for the sedulous building up of a religious atmosphere.

For example, there was a neighbour of his for whom he felt nothing but the most deadly antagonism. Having once imagined himself insulted by this man, his own ego went on fanning the flames of revenge. Out of sheer spite, he reviled his supposed enemy at home

and did his level best to defame him in public. He even went to the extreme of trying to destroy his means of livelihood, by going to court and filing false cases against him.

These reprehensible activities went on for fifteen long years. His children would, of course, hear of religious values from his lips but all the while they would be breathing in an atmosphere which had been poisoned by his destructive activities. And wherever the atmosphere does not match the pious utterances made in it, a set of double standards is bound to be the result. We should never forget that actions speak louder than words.

Most parents, no matter how religious-minded they imagine they are, tend to make this mistake. While they talk to their children of spiritual and moral matters, they divert practically all of their attention to worldly affairs. They will speak of the next life, but they will set up their homes in such a way that the great goal of their lives degenerates into the mere piling up of things of worldly importance. They will extol the virtues of a righteous life, but instead of donating their wealth to good causes, they spend it in the mere fulfilment of the worldly ambitions they have for their children.

This is not religious training; it is but a mockery of it. Religious training is not achieved by the uttering of religious words; it calls for the sedulous building up of a religious atmosphere. In a home where there is no all-pervasive atmosphere of religion, it is not possible to instil moral values simply by letting fall a few religious-sounding phrases. It would not suffice to spend part of the family income on religious matters: conversations, family interests and daily activities must all be rooted in religion. Only then will it be possible to inculcate a truly religious way of thinking in one's children.

The deeds must conform to the words. But all too often they do not. Why should this be so? Why should there be such shortcomings when it comes to putting words into action? The reason is that making any kind of statement only means mouthing a few words, whereas action is complicated by a number of problematic factors. If a man pledges himself to a particular course of action, but then shows himself unwilling to make concessions to some, or all of these factors, he cannot be said to have spoken in true earnest.

Putting principles into practice is not a simple matter. Only half the battle is won by getting up on a platform and addressing an audience. It is not really too difficult to make high-sounding speeches on the moral values of Islam. All one needs to do is to gather enough information from books on the subject and, of course, it helps to have an extensive vocabulary. But practising what one preaches is a different affair. It is seldom that action can be taken without encountering different kinds of obstacles on the way to one's objective. Putting words into action means, inevitably, putting up a struggle.

Another inhibiting factor is the egoism of certain individuals. Even when they have demonstrably erred, they cannot bring themselves to utter the words, "I have erred," or "I was wrong", far less make amends. This would be too damaging to their prestige. This is why we find innumerable

people who are all ready to bear witness to the fault of others, but who cannot, or will not acknowledge their own shortcomings.

It is all too easy to recount anecdotes relating to the acknowledgement of truth by Islamic personalities of bygone days, because the telling of such tales does not in any way detract from one's own moral standing. But when it comes to making an avowal of one's own errors, that is a very different matter because it shows up one's personality in an unattractive light. Thus, a man who successfully projects another's acknowledgement of truth is a total failure when it comes to acknowledging his own mistakes.

An atmosphere at home which suggests that there can be no compromise on principles is the only effective way to train children. If you do not put principles into practice in your private and public life, nothing can prevent your children from receiving bad influences.

This is mainly why people formulate principles, but do not act upon them. They feel that in acting upon principles, their own interests are harmed. The ego comes under attack, much unpleasantness ensues and with all that they are still obliged to return good for evil. Sometimes, people find themselves in the position of having to bow to their enemies and forsake their friends—all for the sake of principles. Equally unpleasant is the

relinquishing to its rightful owner of an object which has been procured and kept by force, or by some other unlawful means. Principles mean nothing unless their formulators refuse to compromise on them.

This is undoubtedly an extremely difficult task. But the creation of an atmosphere at home which suggests that there can be no compromise on principles is the only effective way to train children. If you do not put principles into practice in your private and public life, nothing can prevent your children from receiving bad influences—even if you keep reciting the Quran day and night, and even if you send your children to the most prestigious Islamic schools for their education. □



WHEN JUDGES ARE JUDGED

Everyone is under Trial

ABOUT those who pronounce judgement, the Prophet said, "There are three kinds of judges, one of whom will occupy the Garden of Paradise, while the other two will be consigned to Hellfire. The one to be admitted to the Garden will be the one who recognizes the truth and makes his judgement in accordance with it, while one who recognizes the truth yet makes his judgement in defiance of it will occupy the Fire, as will he who comes to a decision on the basis of ignorance." (*Abu Dawood and Ibn Majah*)

The first obstacle which has to be surmounted in arriving at the truth, whatever the issue, is the veil of falsehood which conceals the facts. Once this has been removed and what is right has been made manifest, there is still the question of personal acceptance of the truth, and, equally important, the willingness to act upon it. Basing a decision upon accurate knowledge frequently demands a sacrifice of some sort—of prestige, position, power, credibility, etc.—from the person who has to make it. Those noble souls will be held worthy heirs of the eternal life who strive to find the truth and who, having found it, are prepared to make whatever sacrifices are necessary in its acceptance and implementation. They are the ones whom God will admit into the Garden of Paradise.

The other two categories of people mentioned by the Prophet cannot be deemed fit to enter Paradise. In the first instance, because lying in the face of a known truth is like staging a rebellion against God Himself, and in the second, because a lack of seriousness in the quest for truth—a wilful ignorance—is quite enough to destine one to damnation. If, having earnestly sought out the truth, one makes a wrong decision, one's action will surely be forgiven, but if, in matters of right and wrong, one makes a judgement without any proper investigation and scrutiny of the facts, one can never be forgiven in the eyes of God.

It should not be thought that this applies only to the judges who sit in the courts of law. Every one of us has to make decisions in life which affect the destinies of others in greater or lesser degree: it is on the basis of these decisions then that our eternal fate will be decided. □

Basing a decision upon accurate knowledge frequently demands a sacrifice of some sort—of prestige, position, power, credibility, etc.—from the person who has to make it.

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.



THE PROPHET: A MAN OF PEACE

Peace in Islam

THE very word Islam (from the Arabic root *silm*) implies peace, and all the teachings of Islam are based directly or indirectly on this principle. There are teachings of the Prophet that say that 'Peace is Islam', and that, 'God is peace' (*Sahih al-Bukhari*). Similarly, there is another *Hadith* (teachings and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) that says that a Muslim is one from whose tongue and hands, people are safe. One of the attributes of God described in the Quran is '*As-Salaam*', which means 'peace and security'. That is to say that God's Being itself is a manifestation or embodiment of peace. In the Quran, divine guidance is likened to the 'path of peace' (5: 16).

In Islam, Paradise, the eternal ideal and the ultimate objective of every human is called the 'Home of Peace' (10: 25). It is also said that the people of Paradise will wish peace for one another, which is another indication of the importance of peace in the ideal society.

Peace is the norm in Islam; war is an exception. All the teachings of Islam and the life of the Prophet of Islam testify to this. There is a *Hadith* that says that God grants to gentleness what He does not grant to harshness. That is to say, a peaceful approach is distinctly superior to violent approach.

Peace in the Quran

The Quran is undoubtedly a book of peace, not a book of war and violence. This can be seen from the fact that all of the Quran's pronouncements are directly or indirectly related to peace. Its opening invocation is—"In the name of God, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful", and this verse is repeated in the Quran 114 times. This is an indication that the greatest attribute of the Supreme Being who sent this book to us is His mercy. We could say that the theme of this entire book is God's all-embracing compassion.

Judging by its consequences, the way of peace is far better than confrontation or conflict. According to the law of God for humankind, "Reconciliation is the best." (4: 128)

God has decreed success only through reconciliation, and not through violent courses of action. The Prophet's wife Aisha said that the Prophet's general policy was always to choose the easier (non-confrontational) path (*Sahih al-Bukhari*).

This means countering aggression with aggression is a hard option and countering aggression with patience and forbearance is an easier option. A radical approach is more difficult than a gradual one. Peace is always the easier option in achieving the desired results.

The Prophet of Peace

Due to the intolerance and violent extremism of small groups of people who call themselves 'Muslims', Islam is currently widely perceived to be a religion of violence, with objectives that appear to be achievable only through terrorism. This, however, is untrue.

Islam is not the name given to the behaviour or the actions of a particular group of people who call themselves 'Muslims'. Islam is a religion which has certain beliefs and ethics, and people who say that they hold those beliefs and value those ethics are called Muslims. It follows, then, that the behaviour of Muslims must be judged by the principles of Islam and not vice versa. Islam cannot be evaluated based on the actions of Muslims.

If individuals calling themselves 'Muslims' adopt terrorism, then the responsibility for their actions lies with them, not with the religion they

The Quran is undoubtedly a book of peace, not a book of war and violence.

This can be seen from the fact that all of the Quran's pronouncements are directly or indirectly related to peace.

profess. In spite of their professed Islamic agenda, the actions of such people cannot be deemed Islamic.

Islam is the name of the revealed religion professed by the Prophet Muhammad, and exemplified in his life. The Prophet Muhammad was a prophet of peace, not a prophet of violence. In the Quran, he is called a 'mercy to humankind'.

He was a peace-loving personality in the complete sense. His peace-loving nature was so heightened that he did not even like to hear the name Harb, which meant war, and guided the parents of the child to change it to Hasan which meant goodness. He believed in cultivating a peaceful character. He wanted his followers to do good works for the people, giving them the message of peace and prosperity and not of death and destruction.

The battles that took place during his life were only incidental and under exceptional circumstances, rather than being the main feature of his life. However, most of the Prophet's biographers have painted an altogether different picture. Instead of presenting him as a prophet of peace they have portrayed him as a prophet of violence.

Islam is the name of the revealed religion professed by the Prophet Muhammad, and exemplified in his life. The Prophet Muhammad was a prophet of peace, not a prophet of violence. In the Quran, he is called a 'mercy to humankind'.

The battles which were fought during the Prophet's time were related to the culture then prevailing amongst the Arab tribes. Before the Prophet's birth there was an ongoing conflict between two major tribes of Madinah. It is said that this war continued for 120 years and thousands of people perished in these battles, the prominent one of which was known by the name of Battle of Bu'ath between Aws and Khazraj tribes.

The Prophet Muhammad was born at a time when Arabia was divided into many different tribes, each with several clans, all vying for domination. Fights between tribes and clans over trivial issues were common. Due to this culture, there were skirmishes between the

Prophet's followers and their opponents. Most of the incidents that have been presented by the biographers of the Prophet as battles can be better classified as minor skirmishes instead.

He began his mission of conveying God's guidance to humankind in a peaceful manner. There was never any act of violence by the Prophet

against those who objected to his teachings or oppressed him and his followers during the entire thirteen years of his life as a prophet in Makkah. While he was in Makkah, his teachings were always those of patience, tolerance and avoidance.

The Prophet and his followers had to face the hardships of a three year social boycott by the opposing Makkan tribes, and they faced this patiently enduring harshest difficulties. His opponents plotted to kill him, so he quietly left Makkah with a few of his Companions to Madinah. He gave the same advice to his followers.

Even in Madinah, his opponents did not leave the Prophet and his followers in peace. They did everything possible to make life miserable for them. At such a time the following verse was revealed:

Will you not fight against those who have broken their oaths and conspired to banish the Messenger? They were the first to attack you. Do you fear them? Surely God is more deserving of your fear, if you are true believers. (9: 13)

These hostilities resulted into the two battles of Badr and Uhud.

After these battles when the Prophet got to know that his opponents were marching towards Madinah with an army of 10,000, he employed a strategy of avoidance by creating a trench outside Madinah because of which an armed conflict was averted.

The Prophet was on a divine mission to present God's message to humankind. Any mission of communication can only be successful when the circumstances are harmonious and peaceful. For an atmosphere of peace, though, a price has to be paid, and that was in the form of perseverance in the face of all obstacles; in ignoring the problems whilst availing of the opportunities. The Prophet's opponents were constantly provoking him and his followers to engage with them in battle over petty issues, but the Prophet and his Companions always chose the divine teachings of patience and forbearance to circumvent every conflict. The Quran says: "Whenever they kindle the fire of war, God puts it out." (5: 64)

If we compare the Prophet's battles with other battles in history, we will find that the mission of the Prophet was a nonviolent mission; and the battles that happened were defensive in nature and under exceptional circumstances.

Further we have the example of the Peace Treaty of Hudaibiya where the Prophet unilaterally accepted all the conditions of the opponents. This treaty was broken by the opponents resulting in their surrender. The Prophet, in spite of the atrocities they had done did not even allow them to be insulted and, instead, announced a general pardon in the following words: “Go, you all are free”.

If we were to objectively study the entire 23 years of prophetic life, it would be absolutely clear that the Prophet Muhammad was a prophet of peace. If we compare the Prophet’s battles with other battles in history, we will find that the mission of the Prophet was a nonviolent mission; and the battles that happened were defensive in nature and under exceptional circumstances.

The number of people killed in these battles was very few when compared to the casualties of many other battles in history.

Battle/War	Period	Duration	Casualties
World War II	1939 – 1945	6 years	About 65 million
American Civil War	1861 – 1865	4 years	About 500,000
Battle of Panipat	14 Jan 1761	1 day	Over 100,000
Gulf War	Aug-1990– Feb-1991	7 months	25,000
Iraq War	Mar. 2003–Dec. 2011	8 ½ years	35,000

In comparison to the above sampling of battles from history, the defensive battles fought by the Prophet were those at Badr, Uhud and Hunain. The combined total duration of actual fighting was equivalent to only 1½ days. The total number of casualties in all these battles was 1,018.

Because of a lack of objective understanding of the Prophet’s life, Muslim biographers have misrepresented the facts by ignoring the prevailing customs and culture of the time. Due to this, their writings about the Prophet’s life show a war-like pattern.

On the other hand, non-Muslim biographers of the Prophet have adopted a different approach. These people have largely ignored the main events of the Prophet’s life choosing to focus on a few, exceptional incidents that they have used as the basis of a picture of the Prophet’s life they have painted, that portrays him as a warrior prophet.

They have also been unable to see the Prophet's life as different from Muslim culture, which has led them to assume that terrorism in the name of Islam is an outcome of the teachings of the Prophet of Islam.

The true modest personality of the Prophet appeared to many of his biographers as deficient in some way or the other. This image of the Prophet appeared to them as falling short of the standards of leaders of other peoples of the time, who were great conquerors and warriors. Hence these biographers tried to present an image of their Prophet as a warrior, which, in their eyes was a superior image.

However, this picture of the Prophet is totally baseless and self-assumed. In truth, the Prophet's was a peace-loving personality. The example of the Prophet was not one of overpowering people by fighting with them; rather it was by winning the people over with love and compassion.

The Quran says:

Believers, obey God and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life. (8: 24)

It is obvious from an understanding of the Quran that the mission of the Prophet was different from that of emperors and kings. The mission of kings is one of conquests and wars. On the other hand, the mission of a Prophet is not to rule over people, but to bring about a spiritual transformation in them and to teach them God-oriented living.

From the above analysis, it should be obvious that the Prophet Muhammad was a prophet of peace, and not a prophet of violence. The approach to the biography of the Prophet by both Muslim and non-Muslim biographers is not correct.

The mission of the Prophet was different from that of emperors and kings. The mission of kings is one of conquests and wars. On the other hand, the mission of a Prophet is not to rule over people, but to bring about a spiritual transformation in them.

We, the members of *CPS International* founded by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan are working for the mission of the Prophet. Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, the recipient of many peace awards has dedicated his entire life for this cause. He has been re-engineering the minds of the people towards peace and positivity. Maulana often says, 'Terrorism is an ideology of violence and we have to counter it with the ideology of peace'. □

PREPARING FOR DEATH

The Ultimate Destination

MAN comes to this world equipped with an excellent mind and an excellent body. Therefore, the first thing one must think of is how he came into being. The world in which he finds himself is an exceptionally favourable one for survival. Here he finds an earth where he can live in comfort. There is the sun which continuously gives light and energy to him. Here is fertile soil in which all kinds of crops can grow. There is abundant water, which is essential for sustaining life. Here there is air which unceasingly provides him with oxygen to breathe.

This planet Earth inhabited by man supports him in numerous ways. Here is a life-support system of a very high order. Without this it could have been impossible for man to survive or make progress. Man has been granted so many blessings that it is impossible to count them all. Only some of these blessings have been discovered by science. These too are so immense in number that even if someone studied them all his life, he would not be able to learn about all of them.

We have to ask these questions: Who made me? Who created this world? Who created this most meaningful life-support system and pressed it into my service?

This situation poses a great question which no person can overlook. Man's own astonishing existence and the beautiful world around him compel him to ponder upon how all this came about.

We have to ask these questions: Who made me? Who created this world? Who created this most meaningful life-support system and pressed it into my service? Everything in

this world is a great blessing and everything is silently giving a call and inviting us to ponder over this matter and discover who the provider of all these blessings is!

There is another very grave matter linked to this question and that is the ephemerality of human existence. Man is born with the most precious faculties. He possesses a miraculous mind. He wishes to achieve limitless progress by making use of his extraordinary talents. Human life appears to have an eternal character but, within less than a hundred years, while man is still on his life's journey, some unknown power intervenes and takes him away and sends him to another world.

Why this happens is an extremely serious question. And it certainly needs to be answered. Any person who is serious about his life can never rest contented without knowing the answer to this question. It is only the right answer to this question that can give a proper explanation of the present life. Moreover, the answer to these questions will tell us what should be done to make life meaningful and successful in the real sense.

Such questions have been objects of reflection throughout human history. Many great minds have devoted themselves to finding answers to them. The answer which has satisfied the minds at a universal level is that there is a God of this world. He is its Creator, its Lord, sustaining the entire world with His almighty powers; and then that this world has been created under a special creation plan.

According to this plan, man is an eternal creature. But the Creator has divided human life into two parts, a small part of which is placed in the phase of life before death, while the major part is placed in the life after death. Death does not mark the end of life. It is rather the entry into another world so that man may spend the rest of his life in an eternal abode.

The Greatest Unawareness

The dead have left the world—this reality is known to everyone. But there is something of which many people are unaware: they too have to die one day. They too are going to face the same fate as that faced by others. It is strange that people see others die every day, yet they exempt themselves from these happenings. It is as if everyone is silently agreeing that others had to die and they have passed away, but that death is not going to come to them.

This lack of awareness is most fatal. Such kind of unawareness is known as 'Ostrich thinking'. Whether or not anyone thinks about death, death without doubt is running towards them.

Death is like an earthquake at an individual level. The earthquake comes without any warning. Death too comes without prior announcement. Everyone is helpless in the face of an earthquake. Similarly, everyone is helpless in the face of death. Death comes all of a sudden. Like the

Man is an eternal creature. But the Creator has divided human life into two parts, a small part of which is placed in the phase of life before death, while the major part is placed in the life after death.

earthquake it shatters the castle of man's illusions. Man may want to prevent the approach of death, but he will never succeed in doing so. Death is governed by its own laws and proceeds without man's consent. This situation demands that man should be extremely sensitive about death. He should feel every night that the next morning he may not see the light of day. Every night when he goes to bed, he should feel that his eyes may not open again the next day. If man is thoroughly conscious of this fact, he will be shaken to the core. Life for him will not mean living in the simple sense. It will rather be the herald of death. Fortunate are those who become aware of this sudden approach of death and make full preparation before death actually strikes them.

Death for Everyone

Death is governed by its own laws and proceeds without man's consent. This situation demands that man should be extremely sensitive about death.

'Life has become for me a waiting period for death', said an old man. In reality, life is a waiting period for death for everyone although most people do not realize this fact. The only difference between an old and a young man is that the reality which is accepted by the old man compulsively will be accepted by the young man only if he ponders over it. For an old man, death is a compulsive discovery. For a young man, it is a conscious discovery. A highly successful American businessman, on reaching 90, felt that he was no longer able

to function either physically or mentally. Now the next stage that he was going to face was death. One day he expressed his feelings to an acquaintance in these words:

"I am going to take a fateful leap into the unknown."

This fate awaits everyone who is born into this world, whether he is weak or strong, rich or poor, literate or illiterate, powerless or powerful. The day is to come for everyone when he will take the fateful leap towards death—even for the one who had been denying that there is life after death.

The wise man is one who realizes this reality in advance. It is this reality which has been expressed in a teaching of the Prophet in these words:

'The wise man is one who controls his desires and works for the life after death; and the unwise man is one who follows his desires and pins all his hopes on God.'

Ephemeral Accomplishments

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, the British Empire was at its zenith. In those times they built a new city (New Delhi) within the bounds of Delhi. It contained the Vice Regal Lodge, Parliament House, India Gate, grand official buildings, a network of broad avenues and beautiful parks, etc. This world of New Delhi in those days was so distinguished that it was regarded a 'political Taj Mahal'.

When this 'political Taj Mahal' was ready, it was visited by a French leader. He was very well read. He knew that the world had seen a democratic revolution and that, like other empires, the British Empire too was certainly going to come to an end one day. Therefore, he expressed himself in these words: "What a magnificent world they have built to leave." This is the story of everyone in this world, with the sole difference that some built small castles and others built big castles. The end of this magnificent 'political Taj Mahal' was that British rulers finally left it on August 15, 1947.

The same end awaits all humans. Certainly the time is going to come for everyone when, all alone, they will have to leave this world leaving their castles behind them. This happening takes place before us each and every day. But no one learns anything from this. Everyone is living as if whatever has happened with others, will not happen with them.

One who sees his own death in the death of others is truly alive. A living person does not wait to undergo a fatal experience and only then learn a lesson from it.

Whether or not one expresses this in words, it is a fact that in this matter every one has exempted themselves although the reality is that no exemption will be made for any human being.

Old Age, Death

Man is born into this world as an infant. Passing through various stages, he reaches adolescence. Then he grows old and finally within a period of a hundred years he dies. It happens to all human beings—compulsory aging after adolescence and afterwards inevitable death.

This is the story of every individual whether he is rich or poor, ruler or ruled. Man appears to be invested with powers. But in the matter of death he is totally powerless, just as an earthquake comes all of a sudden governed by the unilateral laws of nature; similarly, death too comes from the Creator on a unilateral basis. Man has no say in this matter.

This state of affairs demands that man should remember death at every moment. He should be engaged all the time in introspection as to what preparation he has done for the life after death, and what he has in store for his journey after death. People write life's diary but what is more important is to write the diary of death. Everyone should record in his diary as to what he thought today about death.

For instance, hearing of someone's death should remind us of our own death. When we witness that person's last rites and see his body being lowered into the grave, it should remind us that one day we too would be buried in the same way.

One who sees his own death in the death of others is truly alive. A living person does not wait to undergo a fatal experience and only then learn a lesson from it. The truly alive person is one who learns lessons from others' experiences. □



HALF THE STORY

Impediment to Forming of a Correct Opinion

USUALLY people narrate only the second half of their story. They conveniently skip the first half of it. For example, if someone hits a person on the road, the person who is hit will say that another person hit him. But he won't tell what he said himself that made the other person angry, and he hit him under provocation.

In the same way, if there is a dispute between two groups, and incidents of oppression and wrongdoing occur, then there is definitely one group that incites the other with its actions. This is how the other group starts to riot. But when the first group tells the story, it will only describe the second part of the event. It would say that the other group was the first to commit mischief. But they would not acknowledge that they did something which instigated the opposite group, which incensed the other party. Such reporting can be termed as poor or incomplete reporting.

This one-sided reporting is common in society. It is the case of every person—they hide their share of the mistake and only mention the faults of others. This is biased reporting. There are two disadvantages of such reporting. First, it puts a stop to the development of right attitude, and second, it does not solve the problem.

Moreover, this type of reporting is an act of intellectual misconduct. It goes against the demands of justice. This kind of inadequate reporting is morally wrong and does not help in solving the problem.

The narrator of one side of a story may feel happy within, but with respect to the external world, this kind of approach is certainly not useful. □

Biased reporting has two disadvantages. First it puts a stop to the development of right attitude and second it does not solve the problem.



AN UNDISCOVERED REALITY

Journey Towards Death

DEATH is the most known event of human life, yet it is an undiscovered reality. People see or hear of this regularly, but everyone takes it as external news. No one applies it personally. What is the reason? The reason is the 'now-based' culture. This culture is so common that everyone, religious or secular, is living in their 'now'. It is rare to find a person who lives for tomorrow.

It needs an intellectual campaign to make people aware of the reality of death and the Hereafter. Death is the gate through which we enter the next world.

Animals do not possess a mind like humans. Animals are born today and live for today. But a human being has a special mind. The concept of tomorrow is human mind's unique feature. All the planning of a human being is based on tomorrow. Without tomorrow, there is no planning, civilization or activity.

Unawareness of the world Hereafter leads one to plan only for the present. Seldom can you find a person who plans keeping the world Hereafter in mind. They talk of the world Hereafter, but it is mere lip service, not the result of a deeper realization.

It needs an intellectual campaign to make people aware of the reality of death and the Hereafter. Death is the gate through which we enter the next world. But man is oblivious of this significant reality which he should know more than anything else.

The American evangelist Billy Graham has reported a very thoughtful incident. Once he received a message from a very important person, who had requested him to come and meet him urgently. Billy Graham cancelled all engagements and went to meet him. Face to face in his office, the person said without any introduction: 'You see I am an old man. Life has lost all meaning. I am going to take a fateful leap into the unknown. Young man, can you give me a ray of hope?' (*The Secret of Happiness*, Billy Graham, 1955)

This is not just a story of a statesman; rather it is the story of every man and woman. Every person, consciously or unconsciously, is obsessed with this thought. Man's average life expectancy is about 70 years. This is why every person, sometime or the other, thinks: What will be my life after seventy years? What will happen to me after death? What

will happen to me when I leave this world and go to another unknown world?

When his son died, these same thoughts were expressed by the well-known singer Jagjit Singh (1941-2011), in these words: *Chitthi na koi sandesh, jane wo kaun sa desh jahan tum chale gaye.* (You left no letter and no message. No one knows the world to which you have gone.)

These lines do not only represent the feelings of a father at the death of his son, rather it is the case of every human being—if he is alive, then this is his feeling about himself and if he has died, then these are the feelings of the relatives whom he has left behind.

Almost all thinkers of history were obsessed with trying to explain this phenomenon. Everyone tried to discover the answer to this question. However, every answer failed to provide a satisfactory explanation to this phenomenon. In 1935 Alexis Carrel wrote a book *Man, The Unknown*. From another aspect the theme of this book was: *Destination, The Unknown*. Even today this destination has remained unknown and undiscovered.

Having spent my entire life in trying to find an answer to this question led me to the discovery that the only rational answer has been given in the Quran. According to the Quranic explanation, man was born as an eternal creature. But, his life was divided into two parts: the pre-death period and the post-death period. Man's life is like an iceberg. Only a tip of his life lies in the present world, the rest of it lies in the world Hereafter. Man should strive to his utmost to prepare himself for the next world, so that in the Hereafter he can achieve what he could not in the present world.

The question of life after death concerns everyone, consciously in some cases and unconsciously in most cases. Answering this question is the greatest human service. Those who engage in this work will be held as the greatest benefactor of modern human history. Is there any taker for this task? □



REFORMING A SOCIETY

The Only Correct Starting Point

IN ancient times, when Jews suffered their political decline, it produced a tendency among them to fight in order to regain their political glory. At this critical time, according to the Bible, the Prophet Jeremiah told them:

Say to the king and queen mother, "Humble yourselves; sit down. For your rule shall collapse, the crown of your glory." (Jeremiah 13: 18)

The fact is that political power is not the monopoly of any group or community. As long as a community possesses the required capacity, political power will remain with it.

Through this example of the Jews, a universal principle is stated here: nations suffer decline after they have experienced rise. Nations experience political subjugation after enjoying political supremacy. This is exactly according to the law of nature. This fact was highlighted by the historian Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) in these words, "Nations have their lifespan just as people have lifespan." The nations should recognize and acknowledge this change when it comes about. Not accepting the change at this time would mean exposing the community to further destruction.

The fact is that political power is not the monopoly of any group or community. The attainment of political power is linked to its essential capacity. As long as a community possesses the required capacity, political power will remain with it. When it loses this capacity, political power is taken away from it. When this happens, the community should again develop necessary capability, instead of waging fruitless war against those who have been granted political power.

The Quran states that change in the fortunes of a nation is always the result of the change in an individual: God does not change the condition of a people's lot, unless they change what is in their hearts. (13: 11)

Whenever a community's standards fall at the collective level, its cause must be searched at the level of the individuals who comprise it. Because the collective condition of a community or nation can change only after the condition of the people of the nation has changed. There is no other alternative. The process begins at the individual level and not at the level of the crowd. It is only demagoguery that thrives in crowds. No real work of development can take place at this level. □

SLEEP: A REMINDER OF DEATH

Learning from Daily Phenomena

THE Prophet of Islam likened death to sleep and life to the state of wakefulness after sleep. When he woke up every morning, he would say: "All praise and thanks are due to God who gave us life after death."

For humankind, waking and sleeping are likewise symbolic of life and death. Going to sleep is like dying and waking up in the morning is like rising from the grave. Our inevitable awakening after sleeping foreshadows with certainty how we shall arise after death to give an account of our deeds on the Day of Judgement.

Man has to pass his life in this world in such a way that every happening becomes a reminder of the Day of Judgement. His sleeping and rising should also serve as reminders of life after death.

Man has to pass his life in this world in such a way that every happening becomes a reminder of the Day of Judgement. His sleeping and rising should also serve as reminders of life after death.

The gravest aspect of man's life is that his existence does not come to an end after death. He shall be taken to another world. The present world is a world of action, while the world to come will be one in which he reaps his reward. That will be the beginning of a new and eternal life—either eternal Heaven or eternal Hell.

Man is reminded daily of this most important reality when he goes to sleep and when he rises from sleep. In this way, actions of this world come to remind man of the Hereafter.

If we are conscious of the above fact on a daily basis, it will certainly show in our behaviour in the day-to-day life. It is not possible that we be aware of this fact while also leading our life without any consideration for striving towards achieving the higher goals we are meant to achieve in this world. We are here for a purpose and for this, one needs to adopt the concept of high thinking and simple living.

The Prophet of Islam used to lead a very simple life and he laid great stress on simplicity even for believers. Once he said, "O people, don't you hear me, O people, don't you hear me, O people, don't you hear me. Simplicity is undoubtedly a part of faith. Simplicity is undoubtedly a part of faith."

When man has discovered the greatness of God, his own existence in comparison appears quite insignificant. This feeling makes him a truly modest person. He starts living a God-oriented life. His manner ceases to be aggressive and his voice becomes gentle. Even his gait expresses his modesty. His whole attitude comes to reflect a new seriousness.

All this inevitably results in his preferring simplicity in everything: in food, drink and living arrangements. He avoids luxury, pomp and show. His soul finds pleasure and contentment in leading a life of simplicity instead of indulgence.

True faith leads man away from artificial things. He becomes more inclined to lead his life according to the laws of nature, where simplicity is the rule. He develops a liking for a simple way of life. This attitude behoves the believer. Naturalness is in accordance with his modesty and humility, which are great virtues in the eyes of God.

The daily actions of sleeping and waking which might just appear as two ordinary actions amongst many in our life can actually be the greatest reminders to keep us away from frivolities and be serious about achieving the high goals befitting a human being. □

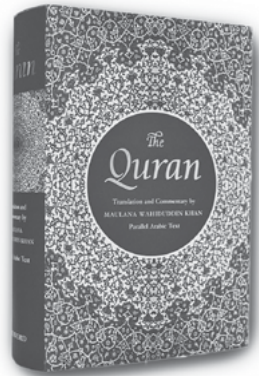


THE WORD OF GOD

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 CE 610 and 632. It is a book that brings glad tidings to humankind, 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



It is We who have ordained death for all of you; and We cannot be prevented from replacing you by others like yourselves or changing your forms and re-creating you in forms that you know nothing of.

You have certainly known the first creation. Why, then, do you not take heed? Have you thought about what crops you plant? Is it you who cause them to grow or do We? If We so pleased, We could turn your harvest into chaff. Then you would start lamenting, 'We are ruined, nay, we are deprived [altogether].'

Have you considered the water that you drink? Is it you who cause it to descend from the clouds, or do We? If We so pleased, We certainly could make it salty. Why, then, are you not grateful? Have you thought about the fire that you kindle? Did you produce the tree that serves as fuel or do We? We have made it to be a reminder and a benefit for the wayfarers. So glorify the name of your Lord, the Supreme. (56: 60-74)

For one who ponders over these events, there are countless lessons. In them there is proof of a second life after the present life. Similarly, there is a sure indication in them that He who has given things can also take them away. Then, there is the example of water. Reservoirs of water are mostly found here in the shape of seas containing salt water. About 98 percent of the water is found in seas and one tenth of its volume is made up of salt. It is a miracle of God's law that when water vapour rises from the sea, pure water rises and the salt is left below. The fact is that the system of rain is a huge universal desalination process. Had this natural arrangement not been in place, all of the water in the world would have been brackish just like sea water.

Nay, I swear by the setting of the stars—and, indeed, that is a most mighty oath, if you only knew—that this is indeed a noble Quran, in a well-guarded preserved Book, which none can touch except the purified. It is a revelation sent down from the Lord of the worlds. How can you regard this discourse with disdain? Do you make its denial your means of livelihood? (56:75-82)

The snow on mountain peaks, the water flowing in rivers would all have been extremely salty. In spite of the vast stores of water on the earth, the non-availability of fresh water would have presented an insurmountable problem for humanity. If man gave this matter consideration, his heart would be full of praises for God.

The word '*mawaqi*' is the plural of '*mauqa'a*'. Its meaning is the place of falling. Here, the *mawaqi* of stars probably means the orbits of stars. In this universe, there are countless big stars. They are revolving in their respective orbits with extreme precision.

This is a happening so great as to be awesome. A person who gives serious consideration to this system functioning in space, will be compelled to admit that the Creator of this universe is unimaginably Mighty. Then the Book coming from such a Creator should also be certainly great, and the Quran is undoubtedly such a great Book.

The Quran reached the Prophet through the angels in exactly the same condition as it was in the preserved tablet (*lawh mahfudh*) and it is still intact in that same condition today. There is no other book of ancient times which has been so perfectly preserved. This in itself is proof of the Book's (the Quran's) greatness. The misfortune of one who does not obtain guidance from such a book is incalculable.

Verse 79 of Chapter 56 needs further elaboration as it is often misconstrued.

It is invariably brought as a proof by those who claim that a person must make ablutions before touching the Quran. In fact, regarding the pure ones referred to in the verse, a renowned commentator of the Quran Ibn Kathir says: "They are the angels; this was believed by a few Companions of the Prophet. The Pagans of Quraysh alleged that the Quran was brought down by devils and so God informed them that none touches it except the pure as mentioned in another verse of the Quran in chapter 26: verses 210-211. It was not the devils who brought down the Quran; neither are they worthy of it, nor are they capable of it." □

ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

The remedy for ignorance is asking questions. (Prophet Muhammad)

The spirit of enquiry is the hallmark of an open society and the above saying of the Prophet aptly illustrates this principle. A culture of curiosity and open-mindedness will foster development in any society by motivating its members to learn enthusiastically and enrich their knowledge. This is because awareness of one's ignorance is half of knowledge, as it becomes a stepping-stone to seeking and finding answers. A questioning mind is like a flowing river that is replenished with fresh thoughts and ideas and continues on its journey.

Can we ask God for death?

No, this is completely forbidden according to Islamic teachings. This has been alluded to in the following *Hadith*:

Sa'd ibn Ubaid narrated that the Prophet said, 'None of you should long for death, for if he is a good man, he may increase his good deeds and if he is an evil-doer, he may refrain from evil deeds and repent. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*)

Hence the longer you live, the more opportunities you get to do good deeds, or repent if you have committed any bad ones. Keeping this wisdom in mind, one should always pray for well-being and happiness and not anything negative. According to the creation plan of God, the hour of death for every individual has been appointed by God Himself. We should accept our natural time of death, as God knows what is best for us.

Is there a positive aspect of the phenomenon of death?

Yes, the positive aspect of death is the sense of urgency that it creates in a person. The thought of death makes a person realize that whatever needs to be done, should be done at the present moment. Whether or not a person believes in religion, the concept of death would still instil a sense of urgency in him.

How do we develop the personality that helps us recover from our misfortunes?

The answer to this question is very easy and very difficult at the same time. It is easy because our Creator has not created anyone to become a case of failure, not even an ant!

We have an example from history through which God has shown us this principle. The principle is to admit one's mistake and then plan for the future. Thus, the starting point is 'I am wrong', or in other words, you blame yourself and not anyone else for what you experience. Generally, people do not admit that they were at fault. When one has the ability to admit one's mistake, then things change for the better.

The King of Japan, Emperor Hirohito, had said at the time of the Japanese defeat in WWII: It is according to the dictates of time and fate that we have resolved to pave the way for a grand peace for all the generations to come by enduring the unendurable and suffering what is insufferable. (The Gyokuon-hoso broadcast, on accepting the Potsdam Declaration)

This is an example of the ultimate extent of admitting one's mistake. □



PONDER OVER
THE CREATION
OF THE HEAVENS
AND THE EARTH

THE QURAN 3: 191

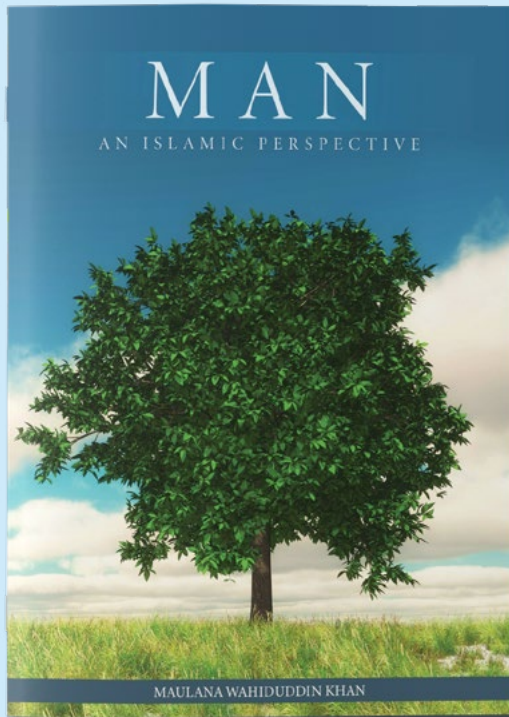


Man: An Islamic Perspective

A booklet by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

The Padma Bhushan awardee Maulana Wahiduddin Khan sets himself the task of investigating man's nature and his true place in the cosmos as revealed in the Islamic Scriptures.

He then applies the results to the resolution of man's present predicament.



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