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Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



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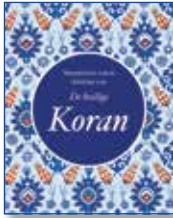
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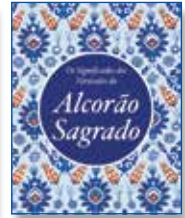
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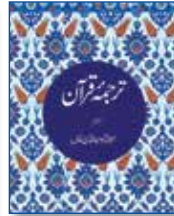
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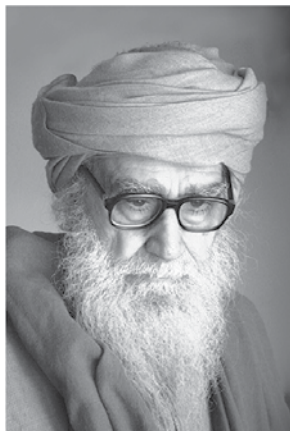
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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.

THE AMERICAN ELECTION

On November 8, 2016 the media presented the news to the world that Donald Trump, the Republican candidate, had been elected as the 46th President of the United States of America.

ON hearing this news the whole world in general and the Muslims in particular were aghast. Muslims, throughout the world began speaking out against Mr. Donald Trump. Muslims feared that the policies of the President elect would be anti-Muslim in nature.

This reaction by the Muslims however, is wholly against the teachings of Islam: if you were to ask any Muslim why he was against Donald Trump he would refer to his election speeches which were apparently anti-Muslim in tone.

In terms of the culture of reaction, Muslims appear to be justified in their stand. But Islam does not believe in the culture of reaction. On the contrary, Islam advocates the principle of unilateral adherence to Islamic ethics.

The Quran has commanded believers to "ignore their hurtful talk" (*da'a azahum*) (33: 48). That is, irrespective of the negative response the

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

other person gives, people of faith should in every situation unilaterally behave positively. This teaching of unilateral ethics has been referred to in the Quran as '*sabr*', or patience. The advocacy of patience is based on the law of nature, according to which it is reality that must ultimately prevail. The Quran teaches believers that unreal things have to be ignored, for their existence is only temporary, and will very quickly be replaced by matters of a permanent nature.

The truth is that, the system of this world functions on the basis of interdependence. The interests of one group are inevitably linked with those of other groups. Therefore no group can deny outright the interests of others. By keeping away from reaction you give nature a chance to work.

This principle of nature has proved true, in the case of Donald Trump. If you go by media reports, you will find that during his election campaign, Donald Trump made a number of negative statements. But soon after the election results were made known, he started making positive statements. Donald Trump's victory speech hints to a softening of his stance towards the minorities. This shows that his Muslim-ban statement was just an election rhetoric. Even Donald Trump's statement on banning Muslims from the US has disappeared from his website.

Such incidents have a great lesson for Muslims. That is, they should always remain patient in the face of adversity. If anything appears undesirable, one should avoid reacting to it, for, according to the law of nature, that ostensibly permanent state will very soon be replaced, and Muslims will find this new state quite acceptable.

Here is a relevant verse from the Quran: "As for those who affirm, 'Our Lord is God,' and then remain steadfast, the angels will descend on them, saying 'have no fear and do not grieve. Rejoice in the (good news) of the Garden that you have been promised.'" (41: 30). 'Remaining steadfast' in this verse, means that when the faithful maintain their positive attitude in spite of their having negative experiences, they receive divine help through the angels and finally achieve success.

Muslims must place their full trust in this verse of the Quran. They must, under all circumstances, adhere to this divine principle, enshrined in the Quran. If they follow it they will find that very soon the course of events will turn in their favour and that with divine planning, they will manage to achieve their goals in a far better manner than they had imagined. □

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan
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ON JESUS CHRIST

Son of Mary

MANY Christians are unaware that in Islam Jesus is considered a prophet of God just as he is in Christianity. Muslims also believe in the miraculous birth of Jesus without a father.

Islam holds both Muhammad and Jesus as prophets, who brought the divine message of God to mankind. Muhammad ibn Abdullah was born in 570 CE in Makkah, while Jesus Christ was born 600 years earlier in Jerusalem. The message that both Jesus and Muhammad brought from God was essentially the same. This message has been preserved for eternity in the form of the Quran revealed to the Prophet Muhammad from God. One of the teachings of the Quran regarding prophets and messengers is: "We make no distinction between any of them." (3: 84) That is, each prophet has to be accorded the same respect and regard, making no distinctions between them.

According to the Quran, Jesus Christ had a miraculous birth: none of the prophets was born in this manner. This fact is mentioned clearly in the Quran in these words: "The Christ Jesus, son of Mary, was a messenger of God and His word, conveyed to Mary, a spirit from Him." (4: 171)

There are many references found in the Islamic scripture with regard to Prophet Jesus and the Christians. The character of the followers of Jesus has been acknowledged in the Quran in these words: "We gave him the Gospel and imbued the hearts of those who followed him, with compassion and mercy." (57: 27)

Islam holds both Muhammad and Jesus as prophets, who brought the divine message of God to mankind.

Similarly, there is a verse in the Quran which indirectly tells Muslims to adopt the method of the followers of Jesus Christ: "Believers, be God's helpers, as Jesus, son of Mary, said to the disciples, 'Who will be my helpers in the cause of God?' The disciples said, 'We shall be God's helpers.'" (61: 14)

Many prophets were sent by God in previous ages, but only with regard to Jesus Christ, the concept of the Second Coming is believed by both Christians and Muslims. This belief accords a special status to Jesus.

There are many similarities in the teachings of Jesus and that of Islam. I will quote an incident in this respect. I was once invited to a Church in New Jersey on one of my visits to the US. There I spoke on the topic

'Islam and Peace.' At the end of the speech, a Christian professor asked me: "In Christianity we believe in the principle 'Love your enemy' (Matthew 5: 44). Can you also cite a similar teaching from the Quran?" I replied that this teaching was indeed common to both Christianity and Islam. In one of its verses the Quran observes: "Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend" (41: 34). Both these teachings from the Quran and the Bible have the same essence—that is, Christianity and Islam do not believe in the dichotomy of friend and enemy. Both religions believe that all human beings have been created on the same nature. Even if a person appears as an enemy, he is potentially a friend. It is upon you to convert this potential into reality by means of positive behaviour.

Both Islam and Christianity are Semetic religions. Peace is one of the most important teachings of both religions.

Both Islam and Christianity are Semetic religions. Peace is one of the most important teachings of both religions. The Bible says: "The Lord blesses his people with peace" (Psalm 29: 11). In a similar vein, the Quran says: "God calls to the Home of Peace" (10: 25). In the present circumstances it would be best for both to work jointly, especially for establishing peace in society. □



Supplication

Supplication is not a mere utterance of some words. Rather, it is the greatest action. Real supplication is never without its results. When someone beseeches God in genuine supplication, it is as if he were making his issue into God's issue. And when something, becomes God's concern, then there is no one who can stop it from being fulfilled.

HELP TO A SEEKER OF TRUTH

Observations in Nature

GOD created a perfect and complete world as an eternal abode for man called Paradise. Then, He wanted to know who were the ones worthy of inhabiting that eternal world. For this purpose, He created the time-bound and imperfect abode in which we are now living. This life, therefore, is only a selection ground. Man is constantly under the observation of his Lord. With every utterance and movement, man is writing his own eternal destiny. One who—during his pre-death period—proves himself through his conduct deserving of that world, will in his post-death-period, be rewarded with admission into it. Others, however, will be flung into the universal junkyard, that is Hell, condemned for eternity. They will lose both the worlds, the present incomplete world as well as the next, perfect and everlasting world.

God has revealed Himself in two books—the Quran and the universe. The Quran is a literal version of God’s word, while the universe, or nature, is a practical demonstration of it. These two are the basic sources of spiritual inspiration for a man who seeks to live a life according to the divine scheme.

This dual source of divine inspiration is mentioned in the Quran in the following verse:

It was God who raised the heavens with no visible supports, and then established Himself on the throne; He has regulated the sun and the moon so that each will pursue its course, for an appointed time. He ordains all things and makes plain His revelations, so that you may be certain of meeting your Lord. (13: 2)

Man is constantly under the observation of his Lord. With every utterance and movement, man is writing his own eternal destiny.

So, the Quran is like a guidebook. It prepares the mind so that one may properly understand the universe and live in it as desired by God. A true believer (*Momin*) has precisely that kind of prepared mind. When he sees the universe with its various parts functioning in an absolutely coherent manner, he will spontaneously say: “There is no god but one God!” and when he examines it, he will find that there are so many complex happenings in its vastness. Nevertheless, he finds that every part of the universe is highly predictable. With this discovery, he realizes that it is as if God

was suggesting that he himself should have a predictable character. When he observes that the various parts of the universe function with absolute harmony, he realizes that, in like manner, he should live in complete harmony with society, without hatred or malice towards anyone. When he sees the events of the universe always proceeding towards a meaningful result, he realizes that man's life, too, must have a meaningful end. Thus he exclaims:

The Quran is a literal version of God's word, while the universe, or nature, is a practical demonstration of it.

"O our Lord! You have not created (all) this without purpose. Glory be to You! Give us salvation from the torment of Hellfire!" (3: 191).

In brief, the universe is a manifestation of the attributes of Almighty God. Hence, it is a source of spiritual nourishment for those who want to lead a divine life on earth. For them, the whole universe becomes a means of reaching spiritual perfection. This spiritual development continues incessantly throughout their earthly life. As the ultimate result of this life-long developmental process, they attain that degree of spirituality, which the Quran calls the '*Rabbani soul.*' It is such as these who, in the life Hereafter, will be told by their Most Compassionate Lord: "Dwell in Paradise; you shall have no fear, nor shall you grieve." (7: 49) □



Controlling Anger

Anger is one of the major things that could cause a relationship to go sour. Anger stokes a quarrel, which, if pursued, leads to personal dislike, and finally, to full-fledged hatred. Hatred eventually leads to evil. In any relationship, trouble is exacerbated by anger. Anger is a natural phenomenon, and the only solution is to control it.

MARRIAGE IN ISLAM

Social Contract & Sacred Bond

NATURE demands that men and women lead their lives together. The ideal way of leading such a life according to the *Shariah* (Islamic Law), is within the bonds of marriage. In Islam, marriage is both a social contract entered into by mutual consent of the bride and groom, and a sacred bond to which great religious and social importance is attached. As an institution, it is a cohesive force in society, and worth protecting and preserving for that reason. To that end, detailed injunctions have been prescribed to maintain its stability and promote its betterment.

However, in the knowledge that an excess of legal constraints can lead to rebellion, such injunctions have been kept to a realistic minimum and have been formulated to be consistent with normal human capabilities. Moreover, their enforcement is less relied upon than the religious conditioning of the individual to ensure the maintenance of high ethical standards and appropriate conduct in marital affairs and family life. The state of marriage not only lays the foundations for family life, but also provides a training ground for individuals to make a positive adjustment to society. When a man and woman prove to be a good husband and wife, they will certainly prove to be good citizens in the broad spectrum of their social group. This has been aptly expressed in a *Hadith*:

“The best of you is one who is best for his family.”

The family being the preliminary unit for the training of human beings, its disintegration has an injurious effect on the society. Human beings must individually make a positive contribution, if collectively they are to form a good and just nation. If the family no longer exists, it is the whole of humanity which suffers. Once a man and a woman are bound together in the bonds of matrimony, they are expected to do their utmost, till the day they die to honour and uphold what the Quran calls their firm contract, or pledge. To this end, the full thrust of the Islamic law is levelled at preventing the occurrence of divorce; the laws it lays down in this regard exist primarily, therefore, as checks, not incentives. Islam regards marriage as an extremely desirable institution, hence its conception of marriage is the rule in life. Divorce is only an exception to that rule. According to a *Hadith*, the Prophet Muhammad said, “Marriage is one of my *sunnah* (way). One who does not follow it, does not belong to me.” □

DIVORCE IN ISLAM

Permissible but Disliked

ALTHOUGH Islam permits divorce, it lays great emphasis on it being a concession, and a measure to be resorted to only when there is no alternative. Seeing it in this light, the Prophet Muhammad said, "Of all things permitted, divorce is the most hateful in the sight of God."

When a man and a woman live together as husband and wife, it is but natural that they should have their differences; it being a biological and psychological fact that each man and woman born into this world are by their very nature quite different from each other. That is why the sole method of having unity in this world is to live unitedly in spite of differences. This can be achieved only through patience and tolerance, virtues advocated by the Prophet not only in a general sense, but, more importantly, in the particular context of married life. Without these qualities, there can be no stability in the bond of marriage.

In the marital situation, the best policy is for each partner to concentrate on the plus points of the other, while ignoring the minus points.

According to Abu Hurayrah (Companion of the Prophet), the Prophet said, "No believing man should bear any grudge against a believing woman. If one of her ways is not to his liking, there will be many things about her that would please him." It is an accepted fact that everyone has their strengths and weaknesses, plus points and minus points. This is equally true of husbands and wives. In the marital situation, the best policy is for each partner to concentrate on the plus points of the other, while ignoring the minus points.

If a husband and wife can see the value of this maxim and consciously adopt it as the main guiding principle in their lives, they will have a far better chance of their marriage remaining stable.

However, it sometimes happens, that unpleasantness crops up, and goes on increasing between husband and wife, with no apparent indication of their being able to smoothen things out themselves. Their thinking about each other in a way that is conditioned by their maladjustment, prevents them from arriving at a just settlement of their differences based on facts rather than on opinions. In such a case, the best strategy according to the Quran is to introduce a third person who will act as an arbiter. Not having any previous association

with the matters under dispute, he will remain dispassionate and will be able to arrive at an objective decision acceptable to both parties. For any arbiter to be successful, however, the husband and wife must also adopt the correct attitude. Here is an incident from the period of the four pious Caliphs, which will illustrate this point. When Ali ibn Abi Talib reigned as the fourth Caliph, a couple complaining of marital discord, came to him to request a settlement. In the light of the above-mentioned Quranic guidance, Ali ordered that a board of arbiters, one from the husband's family and one from the wife's family, be set up, which should make proper enquiries into the circumstances and then give its verdict. This verdict was to be accepted without argument by both sides.

As recorded in the book, *Jami al-Bayan*, by At-Tabari, the woman gave her consent, on the book of God, whether the verdict was for or against her. But the man protested that he would not accept the verdict if it was for separation. Ali said, "What you say is improper. By God, you cannot move from here until you have shown your willingness to accept the verdict of the arbiters in the same spirit as the woman has shown." This makes it clear that a true believer should wholeheartedly accept the arbiters and their verdict in accordance with the Quranic injunctions. Once their verdict is given, there should be no further dispute.

A true believer should wholeheartedly accept the arbiters and their verdict in accordance with the Quranic injunctions. Once their verdict is given, there should be no further dispute.

TWO WAYS OF DIVORCING

However, it has to be conceded that life does not always function smoothly. Despite all safeguards, it sometimes does happen that a couple reach a stage of such desperation that they become intent on separation. Here the *Shariah* gives them guidance in that it prescribes a specific method for separation. The Quran expresses it thus: "Divorce may be pronounced twice, then a woman must be retained in honour or allowed to go with kindness". (2: 229)

This verse has been interpreted to mean that a man who has twice given notice of divorce over a period of two months should remember God before giving notice a third time. Then he should either keep his spouse with him in a spirit of goodwill, or he should release her without doing her any injustice.

This method of divorce prescribed by the Quran, i.e. taking three months to finalize it, makes it impossible for a man seeking divorce suddenly to cast his wife aside. Once he has said to his wife, "I divorce you," both are expected to think the situation over for a whole month. If the man has a change of opinion during this period, he can withdraw his words. If not, he will again say, "I divorce you," and they must again review the situation for a further month. Even at this stage, the husband has the right to revoke the proceedings if he has had a change of heart. If however, in the third month, he says, "I divorce you," the divorce becomes final and the man ceases to have any right to revoke it. Now he is obliged to part with his wife in a spirit of good-will, and give her full rights.

This prescribed method of divorce has ensured that it is a well-considered, planned arrangement and not just a rash step taken in a fit of emotion. When we remember that in most cases, divorce is the result of a fit of anger, we realize that the prescribed method places a tremendous curb on divorce. It takes into account the fact that anger never lasts—tempers necessarily cool down after some time—and that

The sole method of having unity in this world is to live unitedly in spite of differences. This can be achieved only through patience and tolerance, virtues advocated by the Prophet.

those who feel like divorcing their wives in a fit of anger will certainly repent their emotional outburst and will wish to withdraw from the position it has put them in. It also takes into account the fact that divorce is a not a simple matter; it amounts to the breaking up of the home and destroying the future of their children. It is only when tempers have cooled down that the dire consequences of divorce are realized, and the necessity to revoke the decision becomes clear.

When a man marries a woman, he has to say only once that he accepts her as his spouse.

But for divorce, the Quran enjoins a three month period for it to be formalized. That is, for marriage, one utterance is enough, but for a divorce to be finalized, three utterances over a long period are required, as prescribed by the *Shariah*. The purpose of this gap is to give the husband sufficient time to revise his decision, and to consult the well-wishers around him. It also allows time for relatives to intervene in the hopes of persuading both husband and wife to avoid a divorce. Without this gap, none of these things could be achieved. That is why divorce proceedings have to be spread out over a long period of time.

All these preventive measures clearly allow frayed tempers to cool, so that the divorce proceedings need not reach a stage that is irreversible. Divorce, after all, has no saving graces, particularly in respect of its consequences. It simply amounts to ridding oneself of one set of problems only to become embroiled in another set of problems.

TRIPLE TALAQ (DIVORCE)

Despite all the preventive measures for a divorce, it does sometimes happen that a man acts in ignorance, or is rendered incapable of thinking dispassionately by a fit of anger. Then on a single occasion, in a burst of temper, he utters the word "divorce" three times in a row, "*talaq, talaq, talaq!*" Such incidents, which took place in the Prophet's lifetime, still take place even today. Now the question arises as to how the would-be divorcer should be treated. Should his three utterances of *talaq* be treated as only one, and should he then be asked to extend his decision over a three-month period? Or should his three utterances of *talaq* on a single occasion be equated with the three utterances of *talaq* made separately over a three-month period?

There is a *Hadith* recorded by Imam Abu Dawud and several other traditionists which can give us guidance in this matter: Rukana ibn Abu Yazid said "*talaq*" to his wife three times on a single occasion. Then he was extremely sad at the step he had taken. The Prophet asked him exactly how he had divorced her. He replied that he had said "*talaq*" to her three times in a row. The Prophet then observed, "All three count as only one. If you want, you may revoke it."

The prescribed method of divorce over a period of three months has ensured that it is a well-considered, planned arrangement and not just a rash step taken in a fit of emotion.

A man may say "*talaq*" to his wife three times in a row, in contravention of the *Shariah's* prescribed method, thereby committing a sin, but if he was known to be in an emotionally overwrought state at the time, his act may be considered a mere absurdity arising from human weakness. His three utterances of the word *talaq* may be taken as an expression of the intensity of his emotions and thus the equivalent of only one such utterance. He is likely to be told that, having transgressed a *Shariah* law, he must seek God's forgiveness, must regard his three utterances as only one, and must take a full three months to arrive at his final decision.

In the first phase of Islam, however, a different view of divorce was taken by the second Caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab. An incident that illustrates his viewpoint was thus described by Imam Muslim. In the Prophet's lifetime, then under the Caliphate of Abu Bakr and also during the early period of the Caliphate of Umar, three utterances of *talaq* on one occasion used to be taken together as only one utterance. Then it occurred to Umar ibn al-Khattab that in spite of the fact that a system had been laid down which permitted the husband to withdraw his first, or even second *talaq*, men still wanted to rush into divorce. He felt that if they were bent on being hasty, why should not a rule be imposed on them binding them to a final divorce on the utterance of *talaq* three times in a row. And he proceeded to impose such a rule. This act on the part of the second Caliph, apparently against the principles of the Quran and *sunnah*, did not in any way change the law of the *Shariah*. To think that this led to any revision of Islamic law would be to misunderstand the situation: the Caliph's order merely constituted an exception to the rule, and was, moreover, of a temporary nature. This aptly demonstrates how the Islamic *Shariah* may make concessions in accordance with circumstances.

Each law of the *Shariah* may be eternal, but a Muslim ruler has the power to make exceptions in the case of certain individuals under special circumstances. However, such a ruling will not take on the aspect of an eternal law. It will be purely temporary in nature and duration. Various traditions in this connection show that the second Caliph's treatment of certain persons was not in consonance with the *Shariah*. The rulings he

For marriage, one utterance is enough, but for a divorce to be finalized, three utterances are required, between which a long gap has been prescribed by the Shariah.

gave on these occasions were in the nature of executive orders that were consistent with his position as a ruler. If he acted in this manner, it was to punish those who were being hasty in finalizing the divorce procedure.

It is a matter of Islamic historical record that when any such person was brought before Umar for having uttered the word *talaq* three times on one occasion, he held this to be a rebellious conduct and would order him to be flogged. Perhaps the most important aspect of this matter is that when Umar gave his

exceptional verdict on divorce being final after the third utterance of the word *talaq* on a single occasion, his position was not that of an *alim* (scholar) but of a ruler invested with the full power to punish—as a preventive measure—anyone who went against Quranic injunctions.

This was to discourage haste in divorce. By accepting a man's three *talaqs* on the one occasion as final and irrevocable, he caused him to forfeit the right to revoke his initial decision, thus leaving him with no option but to proceed with the divorce.

On the other hand, the Caliph had it in his power to fully compensate any woman affected by this ruling. For instance, he was in a position to guarantee her an honourable life in society and if, due to being divorced, she was in need of financial assistance, he could provide her with continuing maintenance from the government exchequer.

Today, anyone who cites Umar's ruling as a precedent in order to justify the finality of a divorce based on three utterances of the word *talaq* on a single occasion, should remember that his verdict will remain unenforceable, for the simple reason that he does not have the powers that Umar, as Caliph, possessed. Umar's verdict was that of a powerful ruler of the time and not just that of a common man. It is necessary at this point to clear certain misunderstandings which have arisen, about the extent of agreement which existed on Umar's ruling. Of all the Prophet's Companions who were present at Madinah at that time, perhaps the only one to disagree was Ali. As a result of this, certain *ulama* (scholars) have come to the conclusion that the Prophet's followers had reached a consensus on this matter. But the consensus reached was not on the general issue of divorce, but on the right of Muslim rulers to make temporary and exceptional rulings, as had been done by Umar. It is obvious that the Companions of the Prophet could never have agreed to annul a Quranic injunction or to modify for all time, a prescribed system of divorce.

The prescribed method of divorce ensures that it is a well considered, planned arrangement and not just a rash step taken in a fit of emotion.

All that was agreed upon was that exceptional circumstances warranted exceptional rulings on the part of the Caliph. He was entitled to punish—in any manner he thought fitting—anyone who digressed from the *Shariah*. This right possessed by the ruler of the time is clearly established in the *Shariah*. Many other instances, not necessarily relating to personal disputes, can be cited of the exercise of this right. □



INTRODUCING THE QURAN

Creation Plan of God

IF you read the Quran, you will find that it deals with all the subjects relating to human beings. But the basic theme of the Quran is the Creation Plan of God. All other subjects touched upon by the Quran are related to this theme, directly or indirectly. God Almighty created the universe, and, it is God Almighty who revealed this book called *Al-Quran*. The primary purpose of the Quran is to reveal that divine plan according to which the world was created and man was settled in it.

This theme, which is central to the Quran, is thus described in chapter sixty-seven, *Al-Mulk* (The Kingdom): "He created death and life so that He might test you, and find out which of you is best in conduct." (67: 2)

Here, the words life and death refer to two different periods of humanity. The word life represents the pre-death period and the word death represents the second period of life, which may be called the post-death period. God Almighty created man as an eternal being but He divided his life into two periods—the before-death period and the post-death period. The pre-death period is very short, about hundred years, while the post-death period has no such limit. It will continue for eternity.

The primary purpose of the Quran is to reveal that divine plan according to which the world was created and man was settled in it.

In fact, God Almighty created an ideal world that is called Paradise. The present world has all those things that man needs or desires. But, in this world everything, is imperfect in its form. In Paradise, on the other hand, everything is perfect and ideal. Paradise is free of every kind of limitation or disadvantage. Moreover, Paradise is an eternal world. Paradise has a beginning but it has no end.

God Almighty created human beings with freedom of choice and then settled them on earth. Through His prophets, God Almighty gave guidance to humanity. In every age the prophets told the people of all races about right and wrong. They told them what was good and what was bad.

This was simply a matter of guidance; there was no compulsion for people to follow it. People were asked to develop their thinking in such a way as to bring about moral consciousness in themselves and to lead a good life by their own choice. In this sense, everyone is being tested.

Then God Almighty established a system of complete recording. This recording system is managed by the angels. It is so comprehensive that it can record the intentions, speech, behaviour and dealings of every single person. This system is operative at all times, day and night. The purpose of all these arrangements is to select the people who deserve to gain entry into eternal Paradise. At the time of Doomsday, God will appear with His angels and according to the angelic record; He will select those people who passed the test. And then all of the others who failed to mould themselves into heavenly personalities will be thrown into the universal litter bin forever.

What are those qualities that are required for a person to be a deserving candidate for Paradise? In a single word, it is spirituality. Paradise is a spiritual world and only those who have developed spiritual qualities in their personality will be blessed with entry into Paradise.

According to the Quranic description, "Paradise is the home of peace" (10: 25). Paradise is a place where there is no nuisance, no noise; it is free of all kinds of pollution. The inhabitants of Paradise will be positive thinkers in the complete sense of the phrase. The environment of Paradise will be free of all kinds of negative states, like anger, malice, hate, revenge, wrong desires, jealousy, fighting, exploitation and dishonesty, for these negative factors cannot be part of the psychology of the spiritual inhabitants of Paradise.

God Almighty created human beings with freedom of choice and then settled them on the planet earth.

The definition of spirituality given in the dictionary is—the state of being opposed to worldliness. This definition is partly true, for not being worldly is not just for itself, it is for the sake of a higher goal. And that goal is to develop a spiritual way of life.

There are two kinds of spirituality—negative spirituality and positive spirituality. Negative spirituality means renouncing the material world while living in society, or leaving society and settling in some jungle or mountain. This kind of negative spirituality has no creative role. It suppresses all the natural qualities of a human being, who then dies without having made full use of his potential.

The Quran calls us towards spirituality of the positive kind. It means living in the world and trying to derive spiritual food from material things as a matter of intellectual discipline. It means to control rather than kill your desires.

The fact is that God Almighty has created man with great potential. It is not good to suppress this potential. One should rather avail of this potential for the sake of personality development. It means converting every experience, whether good or bad into a positive experience for ourselves. It means living a life of well thought out action and not reacting to situations. This in turn results in developing our personality on intellectual lines.

Positive spirituality can be termed creative spirituality. For example, there is a verse in the Quran which says with reference to the believers that, "they forgive people when they are angry" (3: 134). It means that positive spirituality is based on the principle of anger management rather than one trying to become a person who has no feelings of anger. The principle for positive spirituality can be summarized thus: turn your negative sentiment into positive response; make friends out of enemies. Adopt simple living and high thinking. Simple living and high thinking are complementary to each other. Simple living saves you from all kinds of distractions and high thinking saves you from being the victim of negative experiences. Simple living and high thinking are a *sine qua non* of spiritual culture.

God Almighty created man as an eternal being but He divided his life into two periods—the before-death period and the post-death period.

Positive spirituality is mentioned as follows in the Quran: "You are on the sublime character" (68: 4). Sublime character is that character which is based on high thinking.

If you read the Quran, you will find that it lays great emphasis on *sabr* (patience) (39: 10), *sulh* (reconciliation) (4: 128), forgiveness (42: 40), avoidance (7: 199), etc.

What is the importance of these teachings? These teachings apparently seem to advocate passivity. But that is not so, for they embody great wisdom. The Quran tries to build that kind of mind which is able to manage all the affairs of life on the basis of spirituality. It is not passivity which is advocated but skill in the proper management of life's problems. The Quran's greatest concern is to concentrate on high goals and one who wants to achieve high goals has no option but to foster the afore-mentioned qualities. He has to try to effectively manage all undesirable situations. Otherwise, he will become preoccupied by trivial issues and will fail to continue his journey towards higher goals.

In the chapter of the Quran entitled *Al-Shams* (The Sun), you will find these verses: "He who purifies it will indeed be successful, and he who

corrupts it is sure to fail" (91: 9-10). These Quranic verses refer to the importance of personality development, laying emphasis not on its physical but on its spiritual aspects. It is no exaggeration to say that this is the main theme of the Quran.

What is purification of the soul? It is to purify one's mind of all kinds of bias and negativity. In other words, it is to de-condition the wrong conditioning. This is the mind the Quran tries to build. One who fails in this de-conditioning process will become a corrupt or an unwanted personality in the divine scheme of things.

Man's personality is like an onion. An onion has a central core, but this core is covered by many layers. If one wants to reach the core, one has to remove all these covers or layers. The same is true of the human being. A human personality is always subject to the process of conditioning, which wraps it up in many layers.

The process of conditioning begins right from birth. Initially, it is an unconscious process. The individual's family, the institutions, the society, the community, are all sources of this conditioning. From childhood to adolescence, one is affected by this conditioning. Only after reaching adulthood does one become capable of understanding this problem consciously.

From here onwards begins what is called personality development. It calls for an awakening of the mind and a conscious discovery of the problem. At this stage, the individual must develop the capacity for anti-self thinking. He must engage in introspection. He must try to de-condition his previous conditioning with complete objectivity. This is the most important task for a person. Without carrying out this task, there is no one who is quite complete. Everyone is like a sub-human being.

The Quran calls us towards spirituality of the positive kind. It means living in the world and trying to derive spiritual food from material things as a matter of intellectual discipline.

The Quran calls each one of us towards this de-conditioning. De-conditioning is a process of analyzing what one has stored in one's mind with complete objectivity and then overhauling one's personality in a dispassionate manner. It is to remove the negative thoughts from the mind and turn them into positivity.

Thus, one can say that the Quran is a book which calls people towards their own personality development, so that they become eligible for God's perfect world of Paradise. □

DESPITE DIFFERENCES

Harmony in Society

IF you read the lives of Islamic scholars of the early Muslim period, you will find that they had considerable differences among themselves on religious issues. Yet, despite this, they respected each other. Consider in this regard two incidents.

Ibn Abdul Barr relates that Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Ali ibn al-Madini once had a discussion with each other on a particular issue, so much so that they began to raise their voices. Ibn Abdul Barr says that he feared that this would create bitterness between the two. But when Ali ibn al-Madini was about to leave, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, in a gesture of great respect, stepped forward and took hold of his stirrup.

Where differences of opinion are respected, there will be no intellectual stagnation.

Yunus Siddqi was among the illustrious disciples of Imam Shafi. One day, he had a long debate with his teacher on a particular issue. When they met next, Imam Shafi took hold of his hand and said: "Would it not be better if we lived as brothers even if we cannot agree on any issue?"

These examples illustrate mutual respect but also something greater—and that is, respect for differences of opinion: in other words, viewing differences of opinion from the intellectual point of view, not from the personal point of view.

Respect for differences of opinion is no simple matter. It is directly related to our intellectual development. In a society where differences of opinion are acknowledged and positively accepted, there will definitely be an environment of discussion. People will articulate their respective points of view, offering rational and academic arguments with evidence for the same. Where differences of opinion are respected, there will be no intellectual stagnation. The process of intellectual development will continue. It is intellectual development, one must remember, that is man's greatest need. □



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



THE DISCOVERY OF DIVINE BLESSINGS

MAN has been granted numerous blessings by God. The greatest form of worship for man is the acknowledgement of these blessings, which he expresses as thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is, without doubt, the greatest act of devotion, whereas not thanking God is the worst form of impiety.

None of these divine blessings come to man with any prior announcement. For instance, the global supply of oxygen is continuing at every moment. But man has never been verbally informed about this. There are many such divine blessings that are received by man at all times. But this whole process is going on without any fanfare whatsoever.

Given this situation, how should man perform the act of worship which expresses his genuine thanksgiving, or acknowledgement? There is only one way of doing so. That is, man should constantly strive to discover God's blessings through contemplation, for the discovery of divine blessings must perforce precede thanksgiving. One who has made no attempt at such a discovery will certainly never experience the profound satisfaction of thanksgiving.

That is why such great importance is attached to contemplation in the *Hadith*. According to one *Hadith*, "There is no worship like contemplation."

Contemplation means deep thinking, a process which takes place in the mind—the source of all our actions. The more a human being ponders, the more profound will be the meaning discovered by him. And it is a self-evident truth that the more regularly and sincerely one gives thanks, the greater will be the satisfaction derived from this act.

God's limitless blessings are discovered through cogitation and with this discovery flows the stream of thanksgiving within man. It would be correct to say that the more extensive the discovery, the more intensified will be his thanksgiving. It is contemplation that leads man to discovery and constant discovery leads man to more and more elevated levels of thanksgiving. □

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UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

A Perspective

EVEN prior to independence, the concept of a uniform civil code was a subject of discussion. Wide attention is still focussed on this concept, but it is now seen in a larger context of the Constitution of India. (Article No. 44, Uniform Civil Code).

THE ORDER OF NATURE

Zauq Dehlavi (1789-1854) is a famous poet of the Urdu language. One of his couplets reads:

*Gul hae rang rang se hae zinat-e-chaman
Ai Zauq is jahan ko hai zeib ikhtilaf se*

(A variety of flowers of different hues and shapes make up the beauty of the garden. O Zauq, it is by diversity that this world has been rendered beautiful).

This is the law of nature. If you stood in a garden you would find each plant, each tree different from all the others. The flowers of each tree would show their splendour in their own unique style. The whole garden would appear to possess great diversity. Even birds would be singing in different voices. Everything in nature is a unique specimen of variety.

Variety and difference are a common law of nature that functions throughout all walks of life. No man has it in his power to change it.

This variety is present in all the things of the universe, as well as in man. The study of biology and psychology tells us that one human being is totally different from another. Not just thumb impressions but even the cells of one man are different from those of another. One man's eyes do not resemble anyone else's. This difference and variety is not only for beauty. There is great wisdom behind it. In truth all human progress is associated with this variety and difference. This is what assists us to make new discoveries. It is this factor which results in the materialization of thinking which in turn produces intellectual development. Such challenges act as a spur to intellectual awakening.

If the participants in a meeting were all of the same opinion, no new

idea would be produced. In an industrial system, if all the engineers were cast in the same mould, they would not be able to invent any new technology. In a society, if all the writers had the same tastes, no creative literature would be produced. If all politicians were fashioned alike, they would not be able to bring about any significant political advancement. Variety and difference are a common law of nature, which functions throughout all walks of life. No man has it in his power to change it.

UNI-CULTURAL NATION OR MULTI-CULTURAL NATION

For the last one hundred years, two different political groups in India have tried to mould the country along the lines of their own thinking. One favouring a secular ideology, and the other Hinduism. The ideas of each are totally different from one another. The paradox is that both are in agreement that India should have a common civil code for all. When looked at impartially though, a uniform civil code is against the concepts of both parties. If they are sincere in their ideology, they should not support an idea such as a uniform code.

Secularism means choosing a policy of non-interference by the state in matters of religion. According to the principle of freedom of faith and religion, the government administers only common, worldly matters. This is the internationally agreed concept of secularism. It is along these lines that the Constitution of India has been framed. The difficulty arises when certain people interpret secularism as a religion in itself that encompasses all aspects of private as well as public life, so that the prevalent religions can then be dispensed with. But this is extremism, something which

Secularism means opting for a policy of non-interference by the state in matters of religion.

is to be found in all religious groups and ethical systems. In Islam itself extremists interpret Islam as if it were a religion purely of politics and war. This is, however, an over-exaggeration and is far from being Islam's true representation.

It is a fact that secularism and a uniform civil code are at opposite poles. The secular group of India, if it is so in the true sense of the word, should not talk of a uniform civil code, since the basic principle of secularism is religious freedom and freedom in the private sphere. The other group, who wants to proceed on the basis of Hindu ideology, should know that attempts to bring people belonging to various groups under the same civil code is against its own cherished concepts. The

basic principle of Hindu ideology is *sarva dharma sambhava*, that is, all religions are true. One of the fundamental beliefs of Hinduism is unity in diversity. To it, reality has many forms in appearance but the inner essence is one and the same. Hinduism thus believes in seeing oneness in manyness. A civil code, or any code for that matter, has to do with externals and not with inner spirit. It therefore, goes against the Hindu point of view to attempt to enforce a single civil code by eliminating the personal laws of various groups.

All the developed countries of the West believe in and follow the principle of a multi-cultural nation.

From tiny countries such as Singapore to countries like the United States, all are making progress by adopting this same principle. The Soviet Union is perhaps the only country where attempts were made at the state level to develop a uni-cultural nation. State power was employed to achieve this goal. But far from achieving their goal, the Soviet Union itself disintegrated.

What is actually needed to make India a united, peaceful and developed country is national character.

The truth is that uniformity in these matters has to do with human history rather than with the law. If through the historical process, a uniform culture comes into existence in a society, a uniform code too will follow. Legislation must follow upon and be in consonance with natural trends.

THE ACTUAL NEED: NATIONAL CHARACTER

What is actually needed to make India a united, peaceful and developed country is national character. All deficiencies and shortcomings, all corruption in the country, are traceable to one cause—the inability to produce national character among the people.

A national approach is just the opposite of a personal approach. In the latter, importance is attached to individual interests rather than national interests. Whenever there is a clash between the two demands, individual interest ought to be subordinated to national interest. If any foreign country wants to buy you, your love for your country should stop you from selling yourself. Even if non-payment of tax is to your individual interest, you ought to pay tax as it is in the larger interest of the nation. Adulterated goods bring you more profit, but you must refrain from adulteration as this will hamper the progress of the country. Despite personal grievances, you should not harm

state property. Nor should you attempt to stop the economic cycle, as this would spell ruination for the country. If you lose an election you should in your heart of hearts accept your defeat. A refusal to accept defeat results in the perversion of the entire political system. If you hold an office of responsibility, you must avoid reprehensible conduct for monetary benefit, because such behaviour has an adverse effect on the economic structure of the country. Once you have managed to capture the seat of power, you should not wish to cling to it forever; such political selfishness brings the democratic structure of the country to the verge of annihilation. If you are a leader, you should not give your entire attention to your own election interest; if you stoop to arousing fear and hatred in one group or the other to create your vote-bank, you are in a sense reducing the country to political bankruptcy.

Whenever there is a clash between personal demands and the demands of the nation, individual interests must be subordinated to national interests.

True patriotism is essential for the advancement of the country. But this is the very thing which does not exist in our country. It appears as though everyone has become a self-lover instead of a lover of his country. Everyone has allowed the interests of the country to be eclipsed by his own personal

interests. It is this self-worship which has brought the country to the ruination about which there is general lamentation. Patriotism can never be produced from superficial steps like adopting a common civil code. People's thinking will rather have to be turned in a constructive direction. For this we shall have to educate the public by availing of all resources. We shall have to launch an ongoing and extensive campaign of intellectual awakening and awareness. This is undoubtedly a monumental task. But it has to be conceded that there is no substitute for it. There is simply no alternative. □



Islam

Islam is a scheme of spiritual development.

WORSHIPPING ONE'S CHILDREN

Losing Your Hereafter

The person who loses the most is one who loses the Hereafter for the sake of acquiring for others' a share of the present world.
—Prophet of Islam, Hadith recorded by ibn Majah

IN today's age, this *Hadith* applies most particularly to those people who have children. Today, their children have become the supreme concern for them. Each and every person is busy trying to earn as much worldly wealth as possible for their children and thus have no time at all for doing any real work for their own future in the Hereafter.

Today, people have forgotten the fact that children are simply a test for them. As the Quran (8: 28) says: "Know that your wealth and children are a trial and that there is an immense reward with God." God has not bestowed children to people to keep them constantly busy with them and to spend all their energies for their worldly success.

In this age of ours, there are many people who appear religious. They look very pious and are also very particular about performing various ritual obligations. But in practice, they spend all their time and abilities in earning worldly wealth—only so that when they die, they can leave behind the maximum possible worldly wealth for their children.

But such people are only deceiving themselves. All they will have to offer God are some external rituals that they had performed while in this world. And as far as their real life is concerned, they had devoted it entirely to their children.

This is not worship of God. Rather, it is akin to worshipping one's children. And it is a fact that worship of children cannot earn one the credit of worshipping God.

Worship of God is no mere appendix of life. True worship of God encompasses the entire life of a person. □

Each and every person is busy in trying to earn as much worldly wealth as possible for their children and have no time at all for doing any real work for their own future in the Hereafter.



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.



ISLAMIC INSPIRATION FOR PEACE

THE Quran instructs us to avoid the ignorant (7: 199). The opposite of avoidance is confrontation. Avoiding conflict is one way to maintain peace. On the other hand, confrontation leads to violence between opposing parties.

No one—whether individuals or groups—lives alone in this world. People live in proximity with others who have their own aims and purposes. Each one has their own agenda. Because of this, people and groups often come into conflict with each other. There are two ways to respond to this situation: avoidance of conflict, on the one hand, and confrontation, on the other. There is simply no third option. If one

By avoiding confrontation, he is able to establish a balanced relationship with others, so that his journey progresses without being blocked.

opts for confrontation, it will lead to fighting and violence. The whole of human history testifies to the fact that fighting and violence do not produce any positive results. Hence, one must abstain from and consciously avoid confrontation. Avoidance not only prevents further harm, but also gives us the opportunity to carry on our journey of progress without being stopped by any hurdles that may come our way.

Patience, the Secret of Success

The Quran instructs us:

Have patience: God is with those who are patient. (2: 153)

According to a *Hadith* report contained in the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad, the Prophet Muhammad is said to have declared that it is greatly beneficial to exercise patience in the face of things we do not like. Success goes along with patience. Along with difficulty, the Prophet added, there is ease.

It often happens that when people are faced with a difficult situation or undergo a bitter experience, they get very worked up. In such cases, they may even take to violence. But this sort of reaction is contrary to nature. The fact is that the law of nature always supports those who are firmly established in truth and justice. Such people, if they act with patience will inevitably be successful. In most cases, those who fail are those who act hastily, driven by their emotions. On the other hand, those who are patient are inevitably crowned with success.

Whenever some differences arise between two parties, they should be resolved within the limits of peaceful dialogue.

According to the Quran (46: 35), the opposite of patience is haste. This means that a person who behaves in a patient manner acts according to the pattern of nature. In contrast, someone who acts hastily goes against this pattern—and because of this, he can be sure that it is impossible for him to succeed.

No To Conflict

The Quran tells us:

Let them not dispute with you on this matter
Call them to the path of your Lord. (22: 67)

From this verse we learn that whenever some differences arise between two parties, they should be resolved within the limits of peaceful dialogue. We must never let these differences go out of hand and turn into violent conflict.

In this world, it is but expected that tensions will arise between individuals or groups. This sort of tension is something quite natural. It happens everywhere, and under all sorts of conditions. However, we should make sure that these tensions or differences do not go beyond certain acceptable limits. They must remain within peaceful limits and not turn into confrontation and violence. Differences themselves are

not wrong if they remain within the appropriate limits. They become unacceptable when they transgress these limits.

***The law of nature
always supports
those who are firmly
established in truth
and justice.***

The above-quoted Quranic verse tells us how a person who is inspired by a worthy and positive purpose in life should behave. For him to succeed, he must exercise patience in his dealings with others, even if need be, in a unilateral manner. In practical terms, he simply has no other choice. By avoiding confrontation, he is able to establish a balanced relationship with others, so that his journey progresses without being blocked. □



The Right Comparison

Thinking of oneself in relation to others might lead to arrogance, for it is possible that one will be better off than them; one might hold a higher status in life. But when one thinks of oneself in relation to the vast universe, arrogance disappears, for it becomes apparent how small and insignificant one is. God has created the universe so that we may observe and ponder over it; so that realization of its greatness may lead us to a realization of what a small part we ourselves occupy in it; so that we may be imbued with the quality of humility, which is the greatest and most realistic quality that man can have.

ELIGIBILITY FOR PARADISE

Towards a Life of Restraint

THE Quran is a divine book revealed specifically for the purpose of conveying 'good news' to the righteous. The good news is that if man treads the path of good and right action in the limited life of this world, he will find a place in eternal Paradise in the life Hereafter. The Quran makes it clear that these glad tidings of Paradise are meant only for the righteous.

That is, this good news is for those who adopt a God-oriented or righteous life in this world. Paradise is not to be the destiny of all and sundry, for Paradise is only for the God-fearing (3: 133). It is to be given on a selective basis only to those who are deserving of it. To find a place in the ideal world of Paradise, there is only one condition, and that is being God-fearing, or righteous.

Taqwa means leading a life of restraint or guarding oneself against evil. It is, in actual fact, a phenomenon of sensitiveness. When one becomes highly aware of something, then, naturally one becomes very sensitive about it. Sensitiveness plays the greatest role in human life. One who is not sensitive about something will ignore it, whereas if one is sensitive it will become one's concern towards which the greatest attention will be paid.

Taqwa means leading a life of restraint or guarding oneself against evil. It is, in actual fact, a phenomenon of sensitiveness.

The message of the Quran for man kind is that one should save oneself from distraction. We should awaken our consciousness to the extent that God's obedience becomes our sole concern. No other thing should become the object or centre of our sensitiveness.

There is a verse in the Quran in which it is stated:

Do not follow what you do not know; for the ear and the eye and the heart shall be called to account. (17: 36)

This verse of the Quran commands us to adopt right thinking. For the soundness of human life depends upon this. In both words and actions, the righteous person fully conforms to the divine laws.

According to the Quran, this is in conformity to the creation plan for which man has been created and settled on earth. The earth is no luxury resort; in fact it serves as a testing ground for the purpose of

selecting those individuals who—thanks to their superior qualities—are worthy of being lodged in an ideal place like Paradise. This is what is referred to when the Quran says:

He created death and life so that He might test you, and find out which of you is best in conduct. (67: 2)

All the things God has created can be broadly divided into two categories; the material world and the human world. The material world means the entire universe known as nature. The material world is totally governed by the divine laws laid down by God. It does not deviate to even the slightest degree from this law. But man's case is different. In this universe, man enjoys an exceptional position. That is, man has been granted freedom of choice. Man has full freedom to speak and act as he pleases. This finds expression in different verses of the Quran, two of which are given below:

An important principle of human life is avoidance of arrogance. Arrogance is the source of all evil. By contrast, modesty is the greatest source of all good.

“Do they seek a religion other than the religion of God? When everything in the heavens and the earth has submitted to Him, willingly or unwillingly? To Him they shall all return.”(3: 83)

“If anyone seeks a religion other than Islam [submission to God], it will not be accepted from him; he will be among the losers in the Hereafter.”(3: 85)

In the above verses of the Quran, the word Islam, that is, submission, has been used with the implication that while obedience to the Creator is required by the rest of the universe compulsorily, the same obedience is required of man voluntarily.

Man has been granted the power of hearing, seeing and thinking, so that by using these faculties, he may discover the right path for himself—what is referred to in the Quran as ‘the straight path’ (*sirat-e-mustaqim*). Deviation from the straight path is a proof of the fact that he did not make proper use of the capabilities granted to him by God. Such a man will be held accountable by God. No excuse whatsoever will be accepted by Him. (30: 57)

Moreover, an important principle of human life is avoidance of arrogance. In this regard the Quran says: “Do not walk with pride on the earth; for behold, God does not love arrogant and boastful people.” (31: 18)

This verse of the Quran gives us to understand that arrogance is the source of all evil. By contrast, modesty is the greatest source of all good. According to the Quran, the kind of man desired by God is one who is totally free of arrogance and is a modest person in the full sense.

In the chapter *al-Fajr* of the Quran, we are told that all the pleasant or unpleasant experiences faced by man occur solely as a means of putting him to the test, but man takes such incidents in a negative manner. Having pleasant experiences causes him to suffer from a superiority complex (*akraman*), whereas unpleasant experiences give him an inferiority complex (*ahanan*). (89: 15-16)

According to the Quran, both the above mentioned complexes affect man in an extremely adverse way. The right thing for him to do is that in both sets of circumstances, pleasant or unpleasant, he should consistently tread the path of moderation. Those who prove to be moderate in personality and conduct are described in the Quran as souls at peace (*nafs al-muthmainnah*) (89: 27), that is, complex-free souls.

According to the Quran, the kind of man desired by God is one who is totally free of arrogance and is a modest person in the full sense.

The Quran tells us that the greatest success for man is his gaining entry into Paradise in the eternal life after death. "Truly, this is a great victory! It is for the like of this that all should strive." (37: 60-61). This is a clear indication that, according to the Quran, man's goal should be one and only one, and that is, Paradise. The greatest feature of Paradise is that it is the realm of the Lord of the universe. And without doubt, there can be no success greater than finding oneself in close proximity to one's Lord in the eternal life after death. This unique desirability of Paradise is expressed in this verse of the Quran which gives voice to a sincere and heartfelt human longing:

"My Lord, build me a house in nearness to You in Paradise." (66: 11) □



Conscience

*One who chooses to be insincere
first kills his conscience.*

NEARNESS TO GOD

Greatest Happiness

The Quran (96: 19) says 'prostrate yourself and come closer to God.' According to a *Hadith*, the Prophet of Islam said:

The nearest a person comes to his Lord is when he is in prostration, so make supplications to God in this state. (Sahih Muslim)

THIS nearness to God is not just about the physical form of prostration, but also about the spirit of prostration. The following incident illustrates this point well.

A boy once developed certain habits, because of which his father was very angry with him. The father threw him out of the house. For some time, the boy roamed about here and there. Finally, he met with a man. This man told him, "If you want your father to accept you again, there's only one way. Go quietly back to your house, and when you get there, knock on the door. When the door is opened and you find your father in front of you, then at once you should fall at his feet and say, 'Father, I made a mistake. Please forgive me.'"

The boy did just as the man had suggested. When he fell at his father's feet sobbing, his father, too, began to cry. He lifted him up and hugged him. He pardoned him and took him back inside the house.

Nearness to God is not just about the physical form of prostration, but also about the spirit of prostration.

Prostration before God is something like this. It is not some ritual action. True prostration is when someone, overwhelmed with emotion, lays his head on the ground. It is like placing one's head before God's feet. This sort of prostration is the highest form of surrender and acceptance of God's will. When a person surrenders to God in this manner, God's mercy demands that He forgive him and bestow His grace upon him. □



Creativity

Problems increase creativity.

THE POLITICS OF PARTITION

Leading to Culture of Hatred

IN politics, a partition is a change of political borders cutting through at least one territory considered a homeland by some community. Perhaps the first partition in modern history was that of Poland in 1772.

Ostensibly, partition offers a better prospect for the reduction of conflict. But what is the result of the politics of partition? Experience tells us that almost all the cases of partition have proved to be counter-productive. In the period of pre-partition, people were living with high hopes that partition would improve their lives. But in the post-partition period they found that this was not so and suffered the frustration of having to settle for a lesser degree of well-being than they had anticipated.

Sudan, in north eastern Africa is a case in point. The Sudan liberation movement started in 1983, with intense fighting between two groups right up till 2011. The final outcome was that Sudan was separated into South Sudan and North Sudan.

But what was the result of this partition? In neither country has there been any substantial development. According to the latest international survey, both parts of Sudan have been declared failed states. Two other countries, namely, Somalia and Congo, fall into this same category.

In reality, the whole idea of partition is wrong. There have been a number of cases of partitions throughout history but events have shown that no such step has ever led to any positive outcome. Territorial divisions of countries have repeatedly had negative consequences. Why does partition lead to an undesirable result? It is because, as a political strategy, partition is unnatural, and in this world, any scheme which is unnatural has little chance of success. If developed countries have achieved great things, it has been by following the laws of nature and not vice versa.

Experience tells us that almost all the cases of partition have proved to be counter-productive.

From the very outset, the politics of partition is wrong, because it stems as a rule from hatred, and any plan conceived in hatred for other people is bound to result in an intensification of that hatred. It may safely be said that opting for partition can only lead to unending hatred

and perpetuating the culture of hatred means that once the seeds of negativity have been sown, it will become impossible in this world to reap the fruits of positivity.

Trend setting is one of the most important factors in the building of nations, but adherence to the politics of partition is a bad example to follow. Any country that was founded through partition inherits a deleterious tradition and that in itself is a bad trend to emulate. Trend setting has a beginning but it is difficult to see how and where it will

Opting for partition can only lead to unending hatred and perpetuating the culture of hatred means that once the seeds of negativity have been sown, it will become impossible in this world to reap the fruits of positivity.

end, or if it will end at all. If a country inherits a bad trend, it will continue on the wrong path, with all kinds of development being derailed or brought to naught.

The only salvation in the face of impending ruin is to openly admit failure. Admission of having taken a wrong turn is the surest way to arrive at the point of initiating new planning. Any country born of the politics of partition has only two alternatives; either to acknowledge how flawed its policy was and make a U-turn, or to refuse to admit its error and, in consequence, rush headlong towards national disaster. □



Diligence & Determination

Even without money, material resources or guidance, a man can achieve success provided his desire to do so is keen enough and his diligence matches his determination.

ENJOINING GOOD AND FORBIDDING WRONG

Replace Evil with Good

IN various parts of the world today, Muslims are engaged in acts of violence. If they are told to stop this, they claim: "We are only doing what the Prophet of Islam commanded us to." In this regard, they cite a *Hadith* that orders the believers to rectify a wrong:

He who amongst you sees something wrong should try to rectify it with the help of his hand; and if he has not strength enough to do so, then he should do it with his tongue, and if he has not strength enough to do so, then he should abhor it in his heart, and that is the least of faith. (*Sahih Muslim*)

This *Hadith* is cited by some people in order to claim sanction for violence, although actually the *Hadith* does not mention violence. This *Hadith* speaks about reforming or rectifying a wrong. If one does not have the ability to rectify the wrong, then the *Hadith* says, one should speak out against it. The *Hadith* certainly does not say that on seeing something wrong one must begin to unleash violence against people or resort to suicide-bombing. One cannot derive sanction for violent activities from this *Hadith*.

This *Hadith* talks about *taghayyur-e-munkar*, which means rectifying or remedying a wrong. The Arabic word *taghayyur* means 'replacement'. Hence, in the above *Hadith*, the word *taghayyur* means replacing a condition of evil or wrong with a condition that is not evil or wrong. In other words, this *Hadith* ordains the reforming of a certain condition, not engaging in conflict and causing destruction.

The well-known Arabic dictionary *Lisan al-Arab* explains the word *taghayyur* as follows: 'Taghayyur means to change something. That is, to change it into something that it had not been earlier'. The eleventh-century Muslim scholar of Quranic exegesis and the Arabic language, Raghib al-Isfahani (died 1108 CE) has written a dictionary of Quranic terms, *Al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Quran*, in which he explains the word *taghayyur* thus: "It is said 'I changed (*taghayyur*) my house', which

Almost all Muslims are involved in violence some way or the other, because those Muslims who are not directly engaged in this violence are silent about it.

means that I changed the construction of my house and constructed it anew.”

Today, in various parts of the world violence is taking place in the name of *jihad*. This so-called ‘sacred violence’ is being led by self-styled Muslim leaders. And in this, almost all Muslims are involved in some way or the other, because those Muslims who are not directly engaged in this violence are silent about it. From the Islamic point of view, this silence of theirs is tantamount to indirect involvement. Hence, according to Islamic principles, the entire Muslim *ummah* will be considered to be engaged in this violence—some directly, others indirectly.

Reforming a situation requires that one analyze it with an unbiased mind and then undertake efforts to reform it through constructive planning.

Facts tell us that this violence has produced no positive results at all. There is only one result that is ensuing everywhere from this violence—and that is, destruction. In this

situation, then, one can, without any doubt say that these violent acts are definitely not *taghayyur-e-munkar* or rectification of any wrong. Rectifying a wrong means changing an undesirable situation and bringing in a desirable situation in its place. In contrast, any action that proves counterproductive is definitely destruction, and in no way an Islamically-desirable action.

A negative reaction to an unwanted situation leads to violence and conflict. Rectifying a wrong is a completely positive action. It is undertaken to bring about reform in a given situation, not to make the situation even worse. Reforming a situation requires that one analyze it with an unbiased mind and then undertake efforts to reform it through constructive planning. Those who act contrary to this are, without any doubt, unleashing destruction and not carrying out reform. □



Without God

*Man's life is incomplete
without God.*

DEATH: A POSITIVE REMINDER

Live a Fruitful Life

PAKISTAN'S legendary former captain and batsman, Hanif Mohammad, who held the record for the longest innings in Test cricket, passed away on August 11, 2016. Hanif Mohammad played for the Pakistani cricket team in 55 Test matches between 1952–53 and 1969–70. At his peak he was considered one of the best batsmen in the world.

ICC's chief executive David Richardson paid tribute to the cricketer in these words: "His contribution to the game has been enormous and one can only imagine the kind of impact his batting had on others over the years. Hanif's triple-century against the West Indies was a legendary innings and unsurprisingly he was one of the original inductees into the ICC Cricket Hall of Fame."

Hanif Mohammad had been undergoing treatment for respiratory complications from his lung cancer in Karachi's Aga Khan hospital. His son Shoaib Mohammad said, "My father was in a lot of pain in the last few weeks but didn't give up, such was his fighting spirit."

There is a verse in the Quran which reminds everyone that no one is so powerful that they can prevent the onset of death. The Quran says: "Every soul shall taste death" (3: 185). However powerful a person might be, in comparison to death, every hero becomes a zero. Death gives one this message: 'Even if you are a super-achiever, when it comes to death, there is no exception at all.'

Death gives one this message: 'Even if you are a super-achiever, when it comes to death, there is no exception at all.'

Death is the greatest reminder, which makes every person a man 'cut-to-size'. Ignoring the reality of death is not possible for any human being. Every death admonishes a person to live in this world with modesty.

The Prophet of Islam said, "Remember death much, which demolishes all desires." (*al-Tirmidhi*). This means that the thought of death serves to make a person a realist. It is the reality of death that helps one to come out of wishful thinking. Death makes a person distinguish between 'what he is' and 'what he is not'. If a person focuses on 'what he is', it would bring about realism in his thinking. On the contrary, if a person is governed by thoughts of 'what he is not', he would develop an unrealistic approach to life.

A person's greatest strength is in developing a realistic approach. It is realism that makes a person a right thinker. One who is a right thinker is in a position to do successful planning for his work; no one can place obstacles in the path to his success. Remembering death is the greatest source of wisdom for any person—it guarantees that one's planning will be realistic.

A survey shows that 151,600 people die every day all over the world. This fact is a warning, which makes a person think that perhaps his name is included in the list of people who are to die the next day. This realization creates a sense of urgency. A person thus decides that he should do today what he has postponed for the next day. There is no

Remembering death is the greatest source of wisdom for any person—it guarantees that one's planning will be realistic.

more stronger incentive than the thought of death to keep a person active on a permanent basis.

Moreover, thinking about death prevents a person from committing evil. This is because all evil planning has value only as long as one is alive. But when one is not sure of being alive the next day, it is also doubtful that one would be able to complete one's planning. Death is thus the greatest teacher for everyone.

Apparently, death is a negative event. However, in terms of the result it works as the greatest positive factor in the life of a person. □



Tolerance

The act of tolerance is not a matter of compulsion; it results naturally from the doer being of an elevated moral caliber.

THE WORD OF GOD

From The Scriptures

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

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

It is God who splits the seed and the fruit-stone. He brings forth the living from the dead, and the dead from the living. That is God. How then can you, deluded, turn away from the truth? (6: 95)

When anyone has to manufacture a motor car or any other such complex mechanism, he manufactures every part of it separately. Then he assembles these parts and gives them the requisite finish. But when God causes a tree to grow or creates a human being, the methodology is different. He produces the entity in its totality all at one time. In God's workshop the whole tree or the whole man issues forth from the one seed or the one drop and then proceeds to grow. This is a unique process which no human being can set in motion. This proves that there exists a Being superior to the human being, a Being whose plan is superior to all other plans.

He causes the break of day, and has made the night for rest and He made the sun and the moon to a precise measure. That is the measure determined by the All Mighty and the All Knowing. It is He who has set up for you the stars so that you might be guided by them in the midst of the darkness of land and sea. We have made the signs clear for people who want to understand. (6: 96-97)

The volume of the sun is 1.2 million times that of the earth, and the earth itself is four times larger than the moon. The moon is about two hundred and fifty thousand miles away from the earth and revolves around it. The earth is at a distance of about 95 million miles from the sun and is moving round the latter in two ways—one in rotation on its axis and the other in orbit around the sun. Similarly, there is the revolution of other stars which are at vast distances from us and each other but all moving with extreme regularity. Due to this system

of the universe, day and night come into existence; systems based on the measurement of time take shape; in turn, it becomes possible for man to regulate his life on land and sea. This gigantic system runs with such exactitude that no discrepancy has crept into it even after millions of years. This proves the immanence of a Being whose powers are of unlimited greatness.

These large-scale signs of God show that the Maker of this workshop is extremely knowledgeable. No ignorant being could erect such a complex structure. He is all-powerful; otherwise the running of this enormous workshop in this manner would not have been possible. Its planning is absolutely perfect; without such planning, it would not have been possible to have such meaningfulness and harmony in such a colossal universe.

God's world is full of His signs and arguments. But reasoning or argument is the name of theoretical reasoning and not that of a hammer. So, acceptance of an argument by a man is possible only when he is really serious, i.e. when he is consciously ready to accept the argument, irrespective of whether it goes in his favour or against him.

It is He who first produced you from a single soul, then gave you a place to stay [in life] and a resting place [after death]. We have made Our revelations clear to those who are men of understanding. (6: 98)

Man-made workshops, or factories, are not capable of making a machine which can start giving birth to similar countless machines. Our factories have to manufacture such machines one after another. But in the workshop of God, such an event takes place every day. The seed of a tree is sown and then generations of trees go on multiplying out of that simple, original seed. This is the case with human beings also. Starting with a man and a woman, billions and billions of human beings have started coming into existence—and there is no end to this process. This observation shows that the power of God, who created the universe, is limitless. He is capable of this rare feat of creation by which, primarily, one entity is brought into existence and thereafter it continuously replicates itself in countless numbers. Similarly, God can create a great and perfect world out of this present world. The concept of the Hereafter is not a far-fetched theory; belief in it amounts to acceptance of the possible occurrence of certain future events on the strength of the present observation of similar events taking place every day.

It is He who sends down water from the sky. With it We produce vegetation of all kinds; out of green foliage, We produce clustered grain; and from the date-palm, out of its sheath, We produce bunches of dates hanging low. We produce vineyards and olive groves and pomegranates, alike yet different. Look at their fruit as He causes it to grow and ripen. In this are signs for people who believe. (6: 99)

Earth, or mud, is apparently a dead and inert thing. Then rain falls on it. Soon after the absorption of water, a new lush green world springs out of the earth. Sundry varieties of crops and different kinds of fruit-bearing trees come forth from it. This event also is an example of the coming world after this world. As soon as water permeates the earth, the emergence of a fresh, beautiful and fragrant carpet of colours from the earth indicates the potential which the Creator of the World has implanted here. The righteous deeds which a man performs in this world of today are on a parallel with this. When God's grace rains down, this potential will become a reality—flourishing and producing the burgeoning crops of the Hereafter.

Man, in the beginning, is nurtured in the womb of his mother and thereafter makes his entry into the present world. The grave is also, so to say, a sort of 'womb', to which man is ultimately consigned. Thereafter, he opens his eyes in another, future world, so that he may be sent to Heaven or Hell according to his deeds. Glimpses of and arguments in favour of the unseen hidden world, which man must necessarily accept, are already there in the present tangible and visible world. But only that person will accept it who is already mentally prepared to do so. It is only when a man has travelled half the distance along the path towards Faith (*iman*) that it is possible for the call to the faith to enter freely into his mind and to be acceptable to him. Exhortations to believe in God will not in any way benefit a man who has been travelling in a direction opposite to that of Faith.

They have set up jinns as associates with God, even though He created them! They have even dared, in their ignorance, to attribute sons and daughters to Him. Hallowed be He and exalted far above what they ascribe to Him, the Originator of the heavens and the earth. How could He have a son when He has no consort? He created everything and is aware of everything! This is God, your Lord, there is no God but Him, the Creator of all things, so worship Him; He is the guardian of all things. (6: 100-102)

Since ancient times it has been a weakness on the part of man to find some distinction or mysticism in a thing and then to consider that

thing to be a partner of God and start worshipping it in order to seek its help or save himself from any harm it may do him. It was because of this mentality that many people started worshipping angels, stars and *jinn*s, though the clear proof of their not being gods is that they do not possess the capacity to create. They have neither created themselves, nor are they capable of creating any other thing. They were themselves created by some other Being. So, the question is, whether the Creator will be accepted as God, or His creatures will usurp the position of His godhead.

A tree receives the things it requires for its sustenance in perfect proportions. This is the condition of all things in the universe. When it is a fact that they receive things, (whatever be their nature) because a Giver gives these things to them, then it naturally follows that the Giver will be the One who is aware of all things at all times. If He were not aware of them, how could He fulfil the needs of every single thing exactly according to its requirements? Now, for what purpose should God—the Possessor of such superlative attributes—take anybody as a partner in His godhead? □



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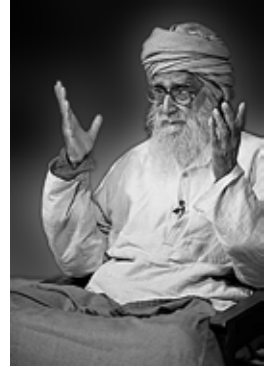
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ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered



Greed is a sin. How would you consider someone who does good deeds (including prayer, charity etc.) simply out of desire for Heaven, and not because he loves doing good or for the love of God. Can this sort of desire for Heaven be a form of greed?

Greed is a social evil. When one is greedy, one tries to take something which is meant for all members of society. Social greed is a kind of social exploitation. Thus, greed is essentially a manifestation of selfishness. But when one expects something in the world of Paradise, it is a reward from God Almighty.

When a person who seeks to enter Paradise performs good deeds, he is living according to the creation plan of God rather than being greedy. According to God's creation plan, human beings have to lead their lives in this world in such a way that they can be held deserving of being settled in the heavenly society of Paradise. If a person leads his life in this world while being conscious of this scheme of things devised by God for his life, then he is fulfilling his duty. And it is in appreciation of his conduct that God rewards him with Paradise in the Hereafter.

How would you consider someone who abstained from bad deeds simply out of fear of Hell, and not because he genuinely wanted to stay away from evil?

Being cautious of doing something that would take one to Hell is not really the fear of Hell. Rather, it is a means not to deprive ourselves of the blessings of God. When we are born into this world, there are numerous blessings and bounties granted to us by God. Without these, we would not be able to lead our lives on this planet. One who consciously realizes this fact would try to live in this world in a way that God's mercy and blessings continue for him even in the world of Hereafter. One who does not acknowledge God's blessings and His favours will have to later face the consequences of such disregard.

God is just. In His wisdom, He arranged for people to be born in families that are associated with different religious and/or ideological traditions. Because of this, most children grow up socialized into believing that the particular religion they were 'born into' is the best one or even the only true one.

If there is only one true religion and people who do not follow it will go to eternal Hell, as some people say, is it just of God to make some people to be born into families that follow this particular religion (because of which they are socialized into believing this religion), while He causes other people to be born into families that follow some other religion (because of which they are socialized into following these other religions). This second category of people did not consciously choose to be born into such families.

Now, if God is just, why would He send the latter people into Hell forever? After all, He was the one who arranged for them to be born into families that follow religions other than the one that is said to be the only true one, because of which they were socialized into believing their religion is true.

Some people will say that this belief—that only those who follow one particular religion (in the sense of believing in a set of beliefs and performing a set ritual practices) will go to Paradise and that all others will go to eternal Hell—indicates a wrong image of God, one of God as being supposedly unjust. They would also say that such a belief is inherently intolerant and aggressive.

How would you respond?

Reward and punishment in the Hereafter are not dependent on one's birth into a family or a particular religion, but is, rather, dependent entirely on self-discovered truth. A person, to whichever religion or family he belongs, will succeed in the Hereafter only if he has been successful in self-discovery of the truth and the realities of life. □



Successful People

The people who ultimately are successful are those who are undaunted by disadvantageous circumstances; who waste no time in lamenting over them.

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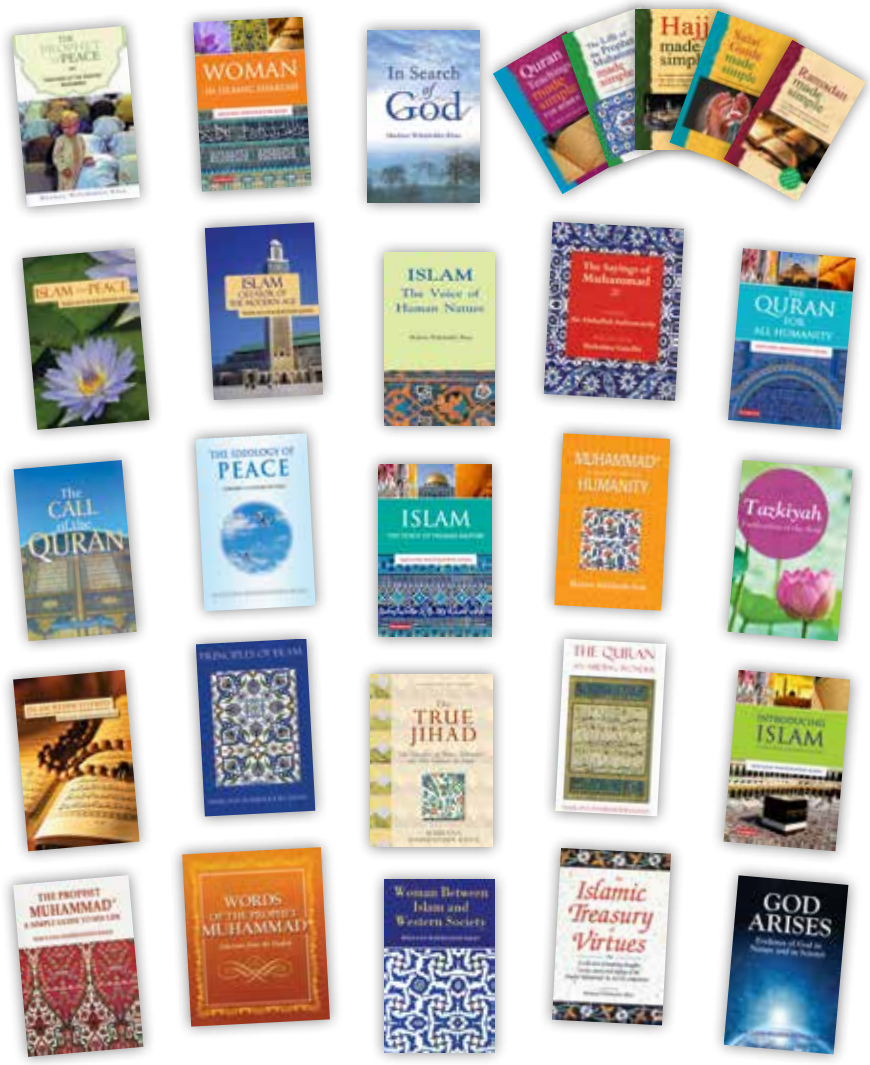
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