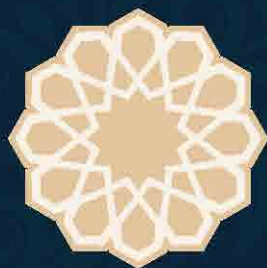


PURPOSE OF
MAN'S
CREATION

Understanding Human History
through God's Creation Plan



MAULANA
WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

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through God's Creation Plan

MAULANA
WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

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This book is an English translation of a chapter of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's Urdu book entitled *Kitab-e-Marefat* entitled *Marefat-e-Takhleeq*.

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FOREWORD

The mission of the Muslim Ummah is to convey the message of the Quran in the modern idiom to all humanity peacefully.

God has created man as an independent being and given him freedom in this world to test him. God wants to know who makes proper use of his freedom and who makes wrongful use of it. The Quran states that God “created death and life so that He might test you, and find out which of you is best in conduct.” (67:2). At another place, the Quran tells us that the jinns and mankind were created to worship God. (51:56) According to the interpretation of Mujahid Tabii, a disciple of Abdullah ibn Abbas, a senior Companion of the Prophet, worship in this verse means the realization of God. (*Tafsir Al-Qurtubi*, Vol. 17, p. 55) This realization is the realization of God and His creation plan. It means that man, using his unique mind, discovers his Creator: his Lord, and understands the creation plan of the Creator for him, that the present world is a selection ground. Here

man is placed in a free environment to find out who proves himself to be the best in conduct. (67:2)

God, Who directs the course of this history while maintaining human freedom, will ultimately bring the world to an end on Doomsday. Subsequently, in God's eyes, those who made proper use of the freedom granted to them will be set apart from those who made wrongful use of their freedom. One who realizes God in this world of test, submits to Him, and lives a God-oriented life will be held deserving of God's highest blessings, that is, Paradise. God wants man to be made aware of this reality.

To select the deserving candidates for Paradise, the first arrangement made by the Creator was to inculcate in human nature the ability to identify right from wrong in the form of one's conscience. This reality has been expressed in the Quran: After creating man, God "inspired him to understand what was right and wrong for him." (91:8) This guidance of human nature to tell right from wrong is like an unspoken admonition. Every man and woman has a conscience that guides him from birth, albeit in a silent language.

Along with this, the Creator arranged for spoken guidance to be given to humanity. By this arrangement,

God sent prophets in every age (35:24). These prophets were given guidance through God's revelations. This is called 'the straight path' in the Quran (1:6). These prophets continued to come to the world in all ages. Adam, as well as being the first man, was also the first prophet. All the prophets who came after Adam until Prophet Muhammad have been counted and the figure has been put at 1,24,000 in a hadith (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 22288). The Quran refers by name to twenty-five prophets. However, none of these prophets has been historically established. Out of the whole history of the prophets, the Prophet Muhammad, the son of Abdullah, and grandson of Abdul Muttalib, is the only prophet who is a historical figure in the complete sense. A scholar has acknowledged this fact: "Muhammad was born within the full light of history." (*The Arabs: A Short History*, Philip K. Hitti, London, 1960, p. 23)

After the Prophet of Islam, the Companions of the Prophet had a unique role: to counter the culture of associating God with things other than God and replace it with the desired divine culture of adoring God alone. This has been called the eradication of *fitna* in the Quran. (8:39) It is owing to this extraordinary role of the Companions that a revolution was set in motion in human history. The Belgian historian, Henri Pirenne (d. 1935), says of this revolution:

“Islam changed the face of the globe. The traditional order of history was overthrown.”
(Henri Pirenne, *A History of Europe*, London, 1958, p. 46)

A significant change brought about by the sacrifices of the Companions was that, for the first time in human history, the age of nature worship was replaced by the era of God worship. All the far-reaching changes made in human history in later centuries were the direct or indirect result of this revolution that the Companions brought about.

The third role in history is to be played by the group, which is called the *Ikhwan* (brothers) of the Prophet. According to a Hadith, the Prophet told his Companions, “I wish to see my brothers.” The Companions asked him if they were not his brothers. The Prophet replied, “No, you are my Companions. My brothers will come after me.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 249)

The Prophet’s contemporary believers who supported him in his mission are called the “Companions” of the Prophet. The “brothers” are those who will dedicate themselves to conveying this divine message to the people of the last phase of human history. In another Hadith, the mission of the Brothers of the Prophet is described thus:

“No home, small or great, will remain on earth, into which God has not caused the word of Islam to enter.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 23814)

The Prophet of Islam started his mission in 610 AD in Makkah. The Prophet being the final messenger, God decreed a powerful team of followers for him, known as the Companions. According to a prediction of the Prophet, a powerful group of his followers would also be formed during the last phase of human history. This team is called *Ikhwan-e-Rasool*, the Brothers of the Prophet. With God’s exceptional support, this second team will play a vital role during the last phase of human history.

The Companions of the Prophet and the Brothers of the Prophet are two different groups of the Muslim *Ummah*; the latter will come into existence more than one thousand five hundred years after the former. Both are dayee groups. The Companions, with special divine support, destroyed the link between *shirk* and political power, which was a serious obstacle to the success of the divine mission they were entrusted with. The Brothers of the Prophet, on the other hand, will break the nexus between science and atheism and will turn the mission of monotheism into an ideological revolution.

The mission of the Muslim *Ummah* is to convey the preserved divine message to all humanity. The Quran was revealed to take the word of God into every home. In the last phase of human history, certain believers rising to the status of the Brothers of the Prophet will be able to attain the realization of God at a higher level by uncovering the signs of God hidden in nature. Then, equipped with new and powerful means of functioning, these people will be able to perform dawah work globally by taking the preserved message of God for humanity—Quran and Sunnah in the modern idiom—to the world.

Wahiduddin Khan
New Delhi, India

August 21, 2020

PURPOSE OF MAN'S CREATION

Despite having complete freedom, man submits to God of his own free will, while the rest of the universe has submitted to God out of compulsion. Paradise is the reward for this conscious surrender.

The Quran tells us that the jinns and mankind were created to worship God. (51: 56)

According to the interpretation of Mujahid Tabii, a disciple of Abdullah ibn Abbas, a senior Companion of the Prophet, worship in this verse means the realization of God (*Tafsir Al-Qurtubi*, Vol. 17, p. 55). There is nothing mysterious about this realization. It is, in fact, the realization of God and His creation plan. It means that man becomes unique in his intellectual ability to discover his Creator, his Lord. Then he should understand the creation plan of the Creator and make himself deserving of God's highest blessing, that is Paradise.

According to a verse of the Quran, God "created death and life so that He might test you" (67:2). The present world is, therefore, a selection ground. Here man is

placed in a free environment to find out who proves himself to be the best in conduct so that God may find eligible candidates for Paradise.

This concept makes life extremely meaningful. The British scientist, Sir James Jeans, on seeing that man comes to this world and leaves this world without making use of the potential of his brain and without achieving the fulfillment of his desires, exclaimed: "Man has strayed into a world which has not been made for him." But, when we look at this in the light of this Quranic concept, human life becomes extremely meaningful.

An attribute of God, according to the Quran, is that He is the best of the creators (23:14), while man is required to be "best in conduct" (67:2). This shows that the very same quality of God, which is at the divine level, is required of man at the human level. The only difference is that this divine attribute manifests itself at the level of powerfulness, while with man, it becomes evident at the level of helplessness and obedience.

Here is a saying of the Prophet: "Adopt divine ethics." (*Sharh Al-Aqeedah At-Tahawiyyah*, Vol. 1, p. 120). This means that man ought to bring himself into line with divine ethics; he should prove to be best in conduct by properly using his freedom, although there is no compulsion for him to do so. Those who fulfill

this criterion will be the people whom God will bless with His nearness in the perfect world of the Hereafter (66:11). They will be held deserving of God's hospitality. (41:32)

We learn from the Quran that the whole universe is obedient to God (3:83). In this respect, the material universe serves as a model of submission to God for humanity. The only difference is that man submits to God of his own free will, despite having complete freedom, while the rest of the universe has submitted to God out of compulsion.

Submission by choice is a unique phenomenon, the proof of which is given only by man in this world. Everything in the universe, from particles to stars and planets, expresses God's glory in the complete sense, albeit in silent language, whereas man stands in this world and articulates his admiration for his Creator by saying: 'O God, You are the greatest. Therefore, I surrender myself before You in acknowledgment of Your greatness.'

It is man alone who discovers his Creator at a conscious level and then, acknowledging his Creator at this level surrenders himself totally before Him. Paradise is the reward for this conscious surrender.

STUDY OF HUMAN HISTORY IN LIGHT OF GOD'S CREATION PLAN

God has indeed created man as a unique creature, and this special creation shows that his Creator requires devotion of an exceptional nature.

In the whole of human history, man has been unique. The Quran has this to say of the creation of man: "I created him with My own Hands." (38:75)

According to a Hadith, "God created man in His image." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6227) These references from the Quran and Hadith make it clear that God has created man as a unique creature, and this special creation shows that his Creator requires devotion of an exceptional nature from him.

If the history of the universe is considered to have started with the event of the Big Bang, it means that the universe has existed for about 15 billion years. During this period, the Creator created innumerable things, finally creating man. According to the Quran, "God created man in the best of mould" (95:4) and gave him the status of an exalted creature (17:70).

Moreover, we learn from the Quran that all creatures in the universe have been created, directly or indirectly, for the service of man. The Quran puts it thus: "He has subjected whatever is in heaven and on the earth to you." (45:13)

This verse of the Quran was revealed in the seventh century. Strangely, scientific research has taken until the twenty-first century to testify to this reality. The latest discoveries have shown that the whole universe is custom-made. Referring to this research, Alfred Russel Wallace writes:

"Such a vast and complex universe as that which we know exists around us may have been absolutely required to produce a world that should be precisely adapted in every detail for the orderly development of life culminating in man." (*The Times of India*, New Delhi, September 26, 2010)

CREATION OF MAN AND THE JINN

God asked both jinns and angles to bow before Adam. This bowing was a token that the jinns and the angels would not become an obstacle to cooperating with man.

A study of the Quran tells us that God uniquely created the planet Earth so that life's survival might be possible on it. To this end, He created the life support system, which is entirely favourable to man. Then He settled the jinns on this planet (15:27). The Earth remained in charge of the jinns for an extended period. The jinns, born of fire, created mischief on the earth. Therefore, God deposed them and created man to inhabit the Earth.

According to the Quran, when God created man, two kinds of creatures, the jinns, and the angels, existed in the world at that time. God asked both of them to bow before Adam. This bowing was a token that neither the jinns nor the angels would become an obstacle for man. They would let man function in freedom. The Quran says: "I am putting a successor on earth." (2:30)

This does not mean that man is God's successor or vicegerent. It means instead that man is the jinn's successor. With humanity's replacement of the jinns, man has been settled on the earth as a creature with total freedom.

According to the Quran, when God announced that He was going to create man, the angels expressed their disapproval, saying, "Will You place someone there who will cause corruption on it and shed blood?" (2:30) The angels may have raised this objection in the light of their experience with the jinns. They meant to say that the jinns created mischief, causing corruption because of being granted freedom. Similarly, man would also cause corruption when given freedom. God replied, "Surely, I know that which you do not know." (2:30)

There is a fundamental difference between the jinns and men; at the very outset, the Creator inculcated in man a unique and powerful feeling: a sense of guilt. When man makes the mistake of misusing his freedom, a sense of guilt is awakened within him, and he begins to reform himself, whereas this feeling of guilt was not inculcated in the jinns created out of the fire. As such, it was hoped that man would not become permanently haughty and disobedient like

Satan but would be repentant and reform himself. This feeling of repentance is a great asset for man. As such, it becomes possible for him to return to the straight path with greater strength after deviating from the right way. The first example is in Adam's life, the first man himself. According to the Quran, he committed a grave error, repented, and received God's guidance. (20:121-122)

In later history, one well-known example is that of Umar ibn Abdul Aziz Umawi (d. 720 AD). He inadvertently committed an error, and then he repented. (*Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya*, Ibn Kathir, Vol. 9, p. 103) As a result, he was later accorded a prominent position in Islamic history, i.e., the fifth rightly guided caliph in Islam.

HISTORY OF HUMANITY

The correct way to write human history is to understand the creation plan of God and then record everything accordingly within this framework.

In the writing of history, historians have traditionally chosen to formalize their work within the frameworks of empires and dynasties, e.g., the Pharaohs of Egypt, the Tsars of Russia, the empires of the Romans and the Sassanids, and the empires of the West. The Muslim civilization has also been called an empire.

However, there is a better and more meaningful framework within which to write history: to record historical work based on the creation plan of God.

All those happenings held to be important by historians are purely relative facts of history. Therefore, the correct way to write human history is to understand the creation plan of God and then record everything accordingly within this framework.

There are four phases of human history.

1. The period of the prophets extends from the coming of the first man, Adam, who was also the first prophet, to Muhammad, the final Prophet (may peace be upon them all).
2. The period of the Companions of the Prophet of Islam.
3. The period of *al-Ikhwān*, that is, those people called the brothers of the Prophet in the Tradition.
4. The period of the righteous people. This age will begin after the Day of Judgement in the Hereafter.

God has created man as an independent being. But unfortunately, while many human beings have made proper use of their freedom, many have misused it. History is, thus, advancing through a series of vicissitudes.

God directs the course of this history while maintaining human freedom, and He will ultimately bring the world to an end on Doomsday. Subsequently, in God's eyes, those who made proper use of the freedom granted to them will be set apart from those who made wrongful use of their freedom. This truth is thus expressed in the Bible: "The descendants of the wicked shall be cut off." (*Psalms*, 37:38)

AGE OF THE PROPHETS

All the prophets sent by God brought the same message of monotheism. Therefore, man was required to lead his life as a worshipper of one God.

According to God's creation plan, man has been placed in this world to put him to the test. To this end, it is necessary to understand what God wants from man. First, God wants to know who makes proper use of his freedom and who makes wrongful use of it.

To distinguish between right and wrong, the first arrangement made by the Creator was to inculcate in human nature the ability to distinguish right from wrong. This reality has been expressed in the Quran: After creating man, God "inspired him to understand what was right and wrong for him" (91:8). This guidance of human nature to distinguish between right and wrong is like an unspoken admonition. Every man and woman has a conscience that guides him from birth, albeit in a silent language.

Along with this, the Creator arranged for spoken guidance to be given to man. By this arrangement, God

sent prophets in every age (35:24). These prophets were given guidance through God's revelations. This is called 'the straight path' in the Quran (1:6). These prophets continued to come to the world in all ages: "then We sent Our messengers in succession" (23:44). Adam, as well as being the first man, was the first prophet. All the prophets who came after Adam until Prophet Muhammad have been counted and the figure has been put at 1,24,000 in a saying of Prophet Muhammad (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 22288). The Quran mentioned twenty-five prophets by name. However, to the modern mind, none of these prophets has been historically established. Out of the whole history of the prophets, the Prophet Muhammad, the son of Abdullah, and grandson of Abdul Muttalib, is the only prophet who is a historical figure in the complete sense. A scholar has acknowledged this fact thus: "Muhammad was born within the full light of history." (*The Arabs: A Short History*, Philip K. Hitti, London, 1960, p. 23)

Why is it that the prophets are not mentioned in ancient history? The reason is traceable to current imperatives in the writing of history. In ancient times, only events related to kings, wars, and victories were considered worth recording. Since the lives of the prophets were not associated with such political circumstances, ancient

historians did not consider them worthy of being recorded. However, since the life of the final Prophet came to be related to political events, contemporary historians attached historical importance to his advent and mentioned him in their books.

All the prophets sent by God brought the same message of monotheism: that man was required to lead his life worshipping the one God. But the prophets who came before Prophet Muhammad could not gather strong teams. That is why the mission of all of these prophets only reached the point of the announcement of monotheism: no real revolution based on monotheism could be brought about. As a result, polytheism continued to prevail. The journey of history could never be made to follow the path of monotheism.

It is the way of God: to lend support to dayees who convey God's message to man. The support of God was given to the prophets in the form of miracles to facilitate their dawah work, calling people to God. For instance, the miracle given to Moses was that his rod turned into a living snake and began moving. But despite these miracles being so extraordinary, people failed to accept the prophets' call. Instead, they rejected miracles, holding them to be mere magic.

NEW PLANNING

A new age of monotheism was ushered in by settling Hajira and Ishmael in the barren desert four thousand years ago. This resulted in a new generation, brought up in an environment of pure nature, free of conditioning, later known as the Ishmaelites.

The existence of the Creator is unobservable, whereas His creation is observable. Because of this, from the beginning of history, man has given himself up to creature worship or nature worship.

A natural urge to worship One God has been inculcated in human nature. A Quranic verse points to this reality, “My Lord, they have led so many men astray.” (14:36)

All those distinctively visible entities that aroused wonder in the human mind were given the godhead status and worshipped. For instance, the sun, the moon, the planets, the mountains, the seas, etc.

That was the principal reason for man’s failure to accept the religion of monotheism throughout human history. Only the religion of phenomenon worship retained its hold in all human settlements. In the Quran, such worship is called *shirk* or polytheism. This continued

from generation to generation. Finally, polytheism became an integral part of human history. This has been expressed in the Quran in the words of Noah when he exhorted his Creator not to leave any deniers of the truth on earth at the time of the great flood: “They will beget none but sinners and deniers of truth.” (71:27)

This influence of polytheism can be called ‘conditioning’. In ancient times everyone was born into the same traditions and became irremediable cases of conditioning.

There is a hadith to this effect: “Every child is born on nature, but their parents make them Jews or Christians or Zoroastrians.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1385)

Abraham, son of Azar (d. 1985 BC), was appointed the Prophet for ancient Iraq. However, despite his extraordinary efforts in dawah work, his people continued to deny the truth. Thus, it became clear that warning the people of their accountability after death, was insufficient to remedy their conditioning. People had become so thoroughly conditioned to *shirk* from one generation to the next that a revolutionary plan was required to break down this mindset. Under this divine plan, Prophet Abraham settled Hajira (Hagar) and Ishmael in the Arabian desert.

By God’s commandment, Prophet Abraham left Syria, accompanied by his wife Hajira and his elder

son Ishmael under the guidance of the angel Gabriel. Whenever he passed by some settlement, Prophet Abraham would ask Gabriel: "Has God commanded me to settle here?" Gabriel would say, "No." In this way, passing by many fertile lands, he reached the appointed place—present-day Makkah. At that time, it was not inhabited. It was all desert and dry, barren mountains. Finally, at the behest of Gabriel, Prophet Abraham settled his wife and child Ishmael there. (*Akhbaru Makkah* by Al-Azraqi, Vol. 1, p. 54)

When Prophet Abraham was to leave what is now Makkah, leaving his family behind, Hajira asked him, "Where are you going, leaving us in this desert?" Hajira repeated this question several times, but Prophet Abraham did not answer. Finally, when Hajira said, "Has God commanded you to do so?" Prophet Abraham replied, "Yes." Hearing this, Hajira said, "Then God will never let us perish." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3364)

This event, which took place four thousand years ago in the Arabian desert, ushered in a new age of monotheism. This new age was one in which a community was to be prepared and should be free of the conditioning of *shirk*. This place, where Hajira was settled, was far from civilized cities. The only things in evidence there were the desert and the mountains by day and the moon and the stars by night—the environment of nature. With the passage of time, a

new generation was born in a natural environment, later known as the Ishmaelites. This generation was raised in a morally pure atmosphere, in a very natural setting. This is because they were the children of nature and remained safe from the influence of conditioning.

Historians generally treat this generation as unique because the individuals it was composed of possessed noble human qualities. In ancient Arabia, these human qualities were referred to as al-Murua (manliness). We may more appropriately call these individuals being on al-fitra, that is, people possessing the qualities of nature. The Western scholar, Philip K Hitti, refers to their extraordinary qualities as “a nation of heroes”. (*History of the Arabs*, 1937)

This desert life for Hajira and Ishmael occasioned extraordinary sacrifice. This sacrifice was a thousand times greater than being martyred on the battlefield. This is why the Quran calls it a ‘great sacrifice.’ (37:107)

In this verse of the Quran, ‘great sacrifice’ does not mean a ram’s sacrifice but rather the sacrifice of Ishmael himself. Four thousand years ago, settling Ishmael in that barren desert was, without doubt, the greatest of sacrifices, not in the physical but in the spiritual sense. Among the progeny of Ishmael—called the Ishmaelites—God sent the final Prophet, Muhammad bin Abdullah.

EMERGENCE OF THE FINAL PROPHET

When all the details of the life and mission of a prophet are preserved with complete authenticity in written form, it becomes the most significant proof of the seal of prophethood. This authentic historical record guarantees that the Prophet's mission will continue.

In one respect, the Prophet of Islam was a messenger like other messengers, but more importantly, he was the final prophet, called the “Seal of the Prophets” (33:40) in the Quran. The ‘Seal of the Prophets’ does not just mean the last of the prophets. More significantly, he draws a line of demarcation between two phases. The first phase of the call of monotheism concluded with him, and the second phase began after him. This second phase of dawah will continue till Doomsday.

Now the question arises as to what form the guidance should take, which has to be given to those born generation after generation after the cessation of prophethood.

We find the answer in the Quran: “It may well be that your Lord will raise you to a station of praise and glory.” (17:79)

In this verse of the Quran, ‘the station of praise and glory’ is no mysterious station. It instead means the station of a historically acknowledged prophet.

The prophetic guidance of all who preceded the Prophet of Islam was primarily confined to the period of their physical presence in this world. Therefore, belief in them after their death required historical authentication. But their lives were not recorded in the annals of history. As such, for later generations, their title to prophethood lacked historical credibility. When someone no longer exists, historical proof is required to support belief in him. Because of this, these prophets, from a purely historical viewpoint, no longer remained an authentic source of guidance for later generations.

For instance, on the subject of Jesus Christ, Bertrand Russell (d. 1970), the well-known British philosopher, writes in his book, *Why I Am Not a Christian*: “Historically, it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all.” (p. 12)

To place the Prophet of Islam in a position of praise and glory means that he was supported with factors

that would help him attain the status of a historically acknowledged prophet. This would maintain his historical authenticity as a prophet, even after his death.

The Prophet of Islam is the only prophet whose entire life and mission have been placed on record in great detail. The Quran calls this established historical record 'the position of praise and glory' (17:79). When all the details of the life and mission of a prophet are preserved with complete authenticity in written form; it becomes the most significant proof of the seal of prophethood. This authentic historical record guarantees that the Prophet's mission will continue. Then there remains no further need for another prophet.

COMPANIONS OF THE PROPHET

The unique trait of the Companions of the Prophet was their ability to acknowledge the Prophet based on pure merit before the establishment of his greatness in human history.

Abdullah ibn Masood, a senior Companion of the Prophet, once said, “God saw the hearts of His servants, and He chose Muhammad. Therefore, he appointed him as His messenger and prophet. Then again, when God saw the people’s hearts, He chose the Companions of the Prophet and made them the supporters of His religion and viziers of His prophet. (*Al-Mu’jam Al-Kabir*, Al-Tabarani, Hadith No. 8583)

This, as well as other such traditions, show that God chose the Companions of the Prophet. They were Ishmaelites nurtured and trained in the Arab desert according to God’s plan. They were uniquely endowed with those human characteristics required for building a team based on the call of monotheism. The Quran describes one crucial aspect of their character as ‘firm and unyielding.’ (48:29)

The most unique trait of the Companions of the Prophet was their ability to acknowledge the Prophet based on pure merit before the establishment of his greatness in history, and then after accepting his prophethood, dedicating themselves entirely to his mission, unlike the contemporaries of previous prophets who failed to recognize the prophets sent to them by God based on their merit. This unique ability of the Prophet's Companions resulted from their upbringing in the desert. This desert training had made them realistic in the ultimate sense. This enabled them to recognize reality in its abstract form. Generally, people recognize a person of exceptional merit only after he has acquired historical grandeur. But the Companions of the Prophet were such believers who could recognize the Prophet in "the hour of hardship" (9:117) before his greatness had been established and could dedicate themselves fully to his mission.

Being "firm and unyielding" (48:29) does not mean that the Companions were harsh to the unbelievers. Here it means that the Companions were mature enough to retain their Islamic character and resisted being conditioned by the environment. They were de-conditioned personalities in the complete sense. The Arabic saying: "*huwa shadidun alayya*" (he does not accept my influence) indicates their calibre.

Moreover, the Ishmaelites had been brought up in the desert environs where any sophisticated amenities of civilization, which might have wrongly conditioned them and caused them to deviate from nature, were absent.

According to verse 29, chapter 48 of the Quran, the Companions were compassionate to one another. However, being consistently kind and compassionate to others is very difficult because, in social life, one is repeatedly faced with unpleasant situations created by others. This gives rise to mutual dislike and a sense of grievance. At such times continuing to be kind to another is possible only by rising above bitterness and animosity. Only a mature person can convert such negative experiences into positive ones.

An act of kindness to another is only of value if it is done unconditionally. Given this reality, it becomes evident that the Companions possessed an exceptional ability to think positively. Because the Companions were positive thinkers, they were able, without any prompting, to be compassionate towards others, despite their complaints, and to be the well-wishers of people despite any unpleasant experiences they had with them.

END OF *FITNA* RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

One of the feats achieved by the Companions was the ending of *fitna*, that is, religious persecution. This was central to the mission of monotheism: to allow people to think freely.

One of the feats achieved by the Companions was in response to the Quranic injunction: “Fight them until there is no more (religious) persecution (*fitnah*)” (8:39). In ancient times, religious persecution (*fitnah*) was the greatest problem faced by those who accepted a faith other than the traditional one. This has been expressed thus in the Quran: “...Destroyed were the people of the trench, the makers of the fuel-stoked fire! They sat by it to watch what they were doing to the believers, whom they hated for no reason other than believing in God, the Almighty, the Praiseworthy.” (85:4-8)

Because religious persecution was the order of the day in ancient times, there was no freedom to choose one’s religion and a complete suspension of free

thinking from all points of view. The rulers supported religious persecution, for they knew full well that it was favourable to their maintaining their political power. In a democracy, a political party takes its mandate from the voters, whereas in ancient times, the kings acquired the right to rule through idolatrous beliefs. The Companions of the Prophet ended the *fitna*, that is, religious persecution, which presented the main obstacle to religious freedom.

ROLE OF THE COMPANIONS

The Companions ushered in a revolution in human history that brought an end to the age of nature worship and brought in the age of God worship. All the far-reaching changes made in human history after that were the direct or indirect result of this revolution.

The history of the Companions, which goes back for more than a thousand years, began with Hajira, the mother of Ishmael. The well-known saying: ‘There is a woman at the beginning of all great things,’ certainly applies to Hajira.

The extraordinary race, the Ishmaelites, was founded due to Hajira’s sacrifice. Those exceptional people, known as the Companions of the Prophet, belonged to this race. What was the role in the history of the Companions of the Prophet?

A tradition of the Prophet throws light on the uniqueness of this role. On the occasion of the Battle of Badr (2 AH), the Prophet raised his hands and prayed on behalf of his companions: “O God, if this group of believers, *al-Isaba*, are killed, no one will

be there to worship You on this earth.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 1763)

Al-Isaba refers to the group of Companions who, after the sacrifice of Hajira, also played an epoch-making role by making pleasing sacrifices. Due to the extraordinary role of the Companions, a revolution was set in motion in human history. The Belgian historian, Henri Pirenne (d. 1935), says of this revolution:

“Islam changed the face of the globe. The traditional order of history was overthrown.”
(Henri Pirenne, *A History of Europe*, London, 1958, p. 46)

A significant change brought about by the sacrifices of the Companions was that the age of nature worship ended for the first time in human history. And the age of God-worship was ushered in. All the far-reaching changes made in human history in later centuries were the direct or indirect result of this revolution based on monotheism.

ALHAMDULILLAH CULTURE

The Creator of the universe desires only one culture for man, the *alhamdulillah* culture, in this world. To promote this culture among men God sent His prophets in succession.

The first verse of the Quran is: “All praise is due to God, the Lord of the Universe” (1:2). This verse tells us what God desires regarding the life of this world. The same verse is found in the Quran regarding the next life: “Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe!” (39:75)

This second verse tells us what God desires about the next life. That is to say, the Creator of the universe wants only one culture for man: the *alhamdulillah* (praise be to God) culture in this world and the next eternal world.

God sent His prophets in succession to promote this *alhamdulillah* culture among men. But only a small number of individuals came under their influence and adopted this culture, while, in general, the *alhamdu lighairillah* (all praise for other than God)

culture continued to reign supreme. This was totally against God’s creation plan for man. That is why God intervened in history. This divine intervention occurred through the Companions of the Prophet in the seventh century.

The role played by the Companions of the Prophet was in obedience to the divine injunction set forth, thus, in the Quran: “Fight them until there is no more (religious) persecution, and religion belongs wholly to God” (8:39). In this verse, *fitnah* means *shirk* (associating other things as deities with God). This is how the commentators have generally described it. What is *shirk*? Shirk is another name for giving praise to something other than God. When man failed to see God, he began to worship creatures visible to him. He began to live to glorify creatures other than the Creator. This is what I have called the *alhamdu lighairillah* culture.

NATURE OF *HAMD*

When an individual reflects on his existence in the universe, he discovers signs of God in creation, and his heart and mind are flooded with a tidal wave of feelings. At that moment, he praises God at a conscious level in the highest acknowledgment of the divine being.

Hamd means high praise, and all praise is due only to God. No one other than God deserves to be praised. When a being is praised, equivalent feelings are produced within the person who does the praising. When one discovers God in all His glory and says: *alhamdulillah*, this is not just an expression of praise but incorporates all high and noble feelings such as gratitude, acknowledgment, emotional attachment, etc. *Hamd* means praise, but as to its usage, it has a large number of meanings. Although *hamd* means to praise, it expresses effulgent acclamation when applied to the Lord of the worlds.

When an individual reflects on his existence in the universe, he discovers signs of God in creation, and his heart and mind are flooded with a tidal wave of feelings. At that moment, he spontaneously calls out:

“All praise is due to God.” This praise is given at a conscious level in the highest acknowledgment of the divine being. There is no degree of acknowledgment more elevated than this.

Man has the consciousness inherent in him from birth that he should discover a Perfect Being and offer Him his highest and best feelings of acknowledgment. Therefore, when a man finds God in response to this urge of his own nature, this is in consonance with what is called *Tawhid* (the oneness of God). But the Quran says: “There are some who set up equals with God and adore them with the adoration due to God” (2:165). And so, when man attributes feelings of adoration to anything or anyone other than God and has an attachment for that thing or person, such as is meant for God alone, this is described as *shirk*. Therefore, a religion based on monotheism is God’s desired religion, whereas the Almighty abhors any religion based on *shirk*.

USHERING IN THE *HAMD* CULTURE

The Prophet's Companions had a unique role: to counter the culture of associating with God things other than God and replace it with the desired divine culture of adoring God alone.

The Companions of the Prophet had a unique role: to counter the culture of associating with God things other than God and replace it with the desired divine culture of adoring God alone. In the following verse of the Quran, the word 'fighting' is used as prevalent in those times:

“Fight them until there is no more [religious] persecution, and religion belongs wholly to God” (8:39)

In ancient times, the prevailing state of affairs was that the culture of *shirk* had the support of political power. This was why armed confrontation had to take place with the political powers of the time to end the culture of worshipping things other than God.

Consequently, God gave the commandments to the Companions to engage in a defensive war against the

Roman and Sassanid empires, the pillars of religious persecution at the time.

This was a challenging task. The Companions' military strength was almost zero compared to the Roman and Sassanid empires. But God sent exceptional help on this occasion: the two empires engaged in internecine warfare and thus entered upon a collision course lasting ten years, considerably weakening them. This point is made in the initial verses of Chapter thirty of the Quran. (30:2-5)

Many predictions in the Bible relate to the Companions of the Prophet. One of these concerns was the overthrowing of the Roman and Sassanid empires. The Bible explains these events in symbolic language: "He looked and startled the nations. And the everlasting mountains were scattered." (*Habakkuk*, 3:6)

During the rule of the second Caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab (634-44 AD), the Companions entered Iran. Rustam, the general of Iran's army, was overawed by their conquest. Therefore, he invited a delegation to his court for negotiation. During their conversation, Rustam asked one of the Companions, Rib'i ibn Amir, why they had entered their country. Rib'i ibn Amir boldly replied: "God has sent us to bring people back from the worship of men to the worship of God." (*Al-Tabari: Taarikhul Umam wal Muluk*, Vol. 3, p. 520)

This meant that God had raised them according to His plan to end the undesirable age of adoring things other than God (*shirk*) and usher in the divine age of the adoration of God alone (monotheism). This initiative of the Companions of the Prophet was not to establish political dominance: it had a much broader significance; their actual mission was to establish a new civilization worldwide. It was to replace one civilization with another, rather than first replacing one government with another—that meant to replace a civilization based on the adoration of entities other than God with a civilization based solely on God's adoration.

MAN-CENTRED PLAN

The creation plan of God is man-centered. The entire system of the earth and the heavens has been created to fulfill human requirements to serve this purpose.

The creation plan of God is man-centered. This is expressed thus in the Quran: “He has subjected whatever is in heaven and on the earth to you; it is all from Him” (45:13). That is, the entire system of the earth and the heavens has been created to fulfill human requirements. Everything, directly or indirectly, is linked to some need or the other of man. In the seventh century AD, when the Quran was revealed, this was nothing but a creed, but this has proved to be a scientific fact in the twenty-first century. The latest scientific research has shown that the universe is “custom-made” and has been wholly created to suit human requirements.

God sent His messengers in every age to make man aware of the creation plan designed for him. But these messengers were human beings just like any other human being, and that was why their contemporaries

failed to recognize them as God's messengers, ridiculing them (36:30) and refusing to accept them. Therefore, for the mission, external support is always required: that is why the prophets were provided with this support in the shape of miracles.

The Final Prophet, Muhammad, was not given any tangible miracle to perform. (*Sahih Al Bukhari*, Hadith No. 4981) But, as laid down in the special divine plan, he was given a powerful team of competent men to support him in his mission. It was with this support that the Prophet of Islam was able to carry out his historic mission. The members of this team, known as the Companions of the Prophet, sprang from a desert culture. It was this desert culture, which was the mainstay of the Prophet, unlike the miracles which had been given to previous prophets to support them.

MUSLIM RULE TOOK EDUCATION TO THE MASSES

**Before Islam, the sphere of education was very limited.
The most far-reaching initiative of Muslim rule was that
it took education to the mass level for the first time.**

The Prophet and his Companions migrated from Makkah to Madinah in 622 AD. After Islam was introduced to the Madinan people, such conditions prevailed as were conducive to establishing a city-state in Madinah. By 632 AD, at the time of the Prophet's death, the whole of Arabia had already come under the rule of the political centre of Madinah. Subsequently, the Muslims' political power expanded rapidly until it extended over the greater part of Asia, Africa, and Europe. This Muslim rule continued intermittently for over a thousand years, sometimes gaining, and sometimes losing in ascendancy.

The spread of this Muslim political power amounted to its vastness to an empire. In principle, it was based on the ideology of Islam. During this long period of Muslim rule, humanity reaped many benefits. For

instance, the coming of the age of human equality, the ending of the age of superstition, the establishment of justice, the dissemination of education among all classes, etc. Although—as is under the general law of nature—Muslim rule was not entirely free of shortcomings; it introduced a new age of development into human history.

The most far-reaching initiative of Muslim rule was that it took education to a mass level for the first time in human history. Before Islam, education was very limited, and people were generally illiterate. The study of books meant only reading religious texts (often without understanding them) for the blessing this would confer or the perusal of royal biographies.

REASON FOR THE SPREAD OF EDUCATION

The Quran stresses thinking and contemplation. During Muslim rule, nature was displaced from the pedestal of worship under the influence of Quranic ideology. Subsequently, nature became a subject of research and investigation, leading to the scientific revolution.

The actual reason for this unparalleled impetus given to education was, without doubt, the influence of the Quran, the first preserved divine book in human history to lay great emphasis on reflection upon natural phenomena as being of God's creation.

The Quran stressed thinking and contemplation, almost elevating these mental activities to worship. The last verses of chapter 3 of the Quran mention those who reflect on the universe and the creation of the heavens and the earth (3:191). In chapter 35, verse 28, those who reflect on the system of the rains, the vegetable world, the animals, the making of the mountains, etc. have been given the status of the learned (*ulama*). For the first time, we know from the Quran that "God has subjected whatever is in heaven

and on the earth to you” (45: 13). As a result, far from being man’s object of worship, nature began to be treated as man’s servant.

Several such verses have introduced believers to an extended area of knowledge in the Quran. Accordingly, the entire universe became a vast library for contemplation. Learning no longer remained a limited sphere but was transformed into a field accessible to all.

This was no simple matter. *Shirk*, which had prevailed throughout the world before Islam’s emergence, was another name for nature worship. In the ideology of *shirk*, nature, having been placed on the pedestal of worship, could never have been treated as an object of investigation.

During Muslim rule, under the influence of Quranic ideology, nature generally came to be displaced from the pedestal of worship. Subsequently, the phenomena of nature became a major subject of research and investigation. Madinah became the first centre of this new culture, reaching Damascus, Cairo, and Baghdad. In Baghdad, it flourished greatly. Later, it reached Muslim Spain, with Cordova and Granada becoming its centres. Under Muslim rule, this began an age of learning; all the things of the universe became the

subjects of study and research, whereas earlier, they had been treated with solemn reverence.

Several scholars have acknowledged this reality. For instance, the British historian Arnold Toynbee (d. 1975) posed the question as to why, when physical science was nothing but the discovery of nature—nature which had always existed in the world—and of which man had been aware from the beginning, there should have been this significantly delayed discovery of nature in modern times? In attempting to answer this question, Arnold Toynbee wrote that, in ancient times, man, having come to regard nature as sacred, had accorded it the status of divinity. That was why man could never think of investigating or conquering nature. According to Arnold Toynbee, in later periods of human history, when monotheism gained ideological ascendancy, putting an end to the ideology of *shirk*, man began to think very differently about nature. This later became the cause of the scientific revolution. (For details, see *Islam: Creator of the Modern Age* by the author)

BROTHERS OF THE PROPHET

The Brothers of the Prophet are those who will dedicate themselves to conveying the divine message to the people of the last phase of human history. Their mission is to take the word of God into every home, big or small. (Musnad Ahmad, Hadith No. 23814)

The third role in history is played by the group which is called the *Ikhwan* (brothers) of the Prophet. According to a Hadith, the Prophet told his companions, “I wish to see my brothers.” The Companions asked him if they were not his brothers. The Prophet replied, “No, you are my Companions. My brothers will come after me.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 249)

The Prophet’s contemporary believers who supported him in his dawah mission are called the “Companions” of the Prophet. The “brothers” are those who will come to know the Prophet’s mission and dedicate themselves to conveying the divine message to the people of the last phase of human history. We learn of the mission of the Brothers of the Prophet from another Hadith in which it is described thus: “No home, small or great, will remain on earth, into which God has not caused the word of Islam to enter.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 23814)

This Hadith does not mean that Islam's political rule would become established worldwide during the last phase of human history. This Hadith relates to the call to God that needs to be performed at the global level rather than the establishment of a political empire. The wording of the Hadith is the 'word of Islam', not 'the government of Islam'. This global call during the last phase will be supported by scientific culture. Such resources will be discovered, and such technology will be developed to make communicating the word of God to all human beings possible, whether the people to whom it is conveyed accept it or reject it. Those who accept the message will be held deserving of God's reward. There may also be those who reject the message.

This prediction refers to the latter half of the twentieth century, the computer age, or the age of technology. This final role in human history is destined for the righteous (21:105). The righteous refers to those whom God will select to inhabit eternal Paradise in the Hereafter where they will develop a spiritual civilization. They will perform this role after Judgment Day with the support of the angels in Paradise. This is what amounts to spiritual civilization.

In accordance with the prediction made in this tradition, the Brothers of the Prophet will undoubtedly arise during the last phase of human history so that the dawah work may be performed, which has been planned for this final stage. A role has been defined for the Brothers of the Prophet, which they will perform in later times with divine

support, just as in the seventh century, the Companions of the Prophet ably performed the role for which they were destined. No angel will appear and announce which group is that of the Brothers of the Prophet. Such a declaration will be made only in the Hereafter.

However, the realized souls will recognize and support them, so they may be held deserving of God's rewards in the Hereafter.

The case of the Brothers of the Prophet is not something mysterious. We can certainly understand it by studying the Quran and the Hadith. Human history is divided into two major phases. Muslims have to play only one role at every age: calling people to God. Those who performed this work along prophetic lines during the Prophet's lifetime are called the Companions of the Prophet, while those who will engage in this work along prophetic lines in the last phase of human history will be called the Brothers of the Prophet.

Further study tells us that the task performed by the Companions of the Prophet was to bring about a revolution based on monotheism. (The Quran, 48:29)

In later times the Brothers of the Prophet will perform the task of *Idkhal-e-Kalimah* which means 'Letting the word of God enter all homes, big or small.' (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 23814)

'*Idkhal-e-Kalema*' this means God's words entering every home. It refers to the age in which the Brothers

of the Prophet will work. For, taking the word of God into all homes can be performed only when all kinds of favourable factors emerge to facilitate this work, for example, global communication, religious freedom, etc. All of these exist in the present age. Therefore, it is certain that we have already reached the stage for the Brothers of the Prophet to arise and perform the task of spreading the word of God on a global scale.

However, it should be noted that all this work will be at the level of human beings and not at the level of some superhuman beings. The Companions of the Prophet were human beings. They played their role at the human level. Only those of their contemporaries recognized them who knew that the Companions were human beings and not some superhuman beings.

Similarly, in later times the role of the Brothers of the Prophet will also be performed at the human level. As such, only those will be blessed with recognition of the Brothers of the Prophet who can recognize them at the human level. Those who have some mysterious conception of the Brothers of the Prophet and want to see them not as human beings but as beings above the human level will fail to recognize them, just as many failed to recognize the Companions of the Prophet.

REAL PICTURE AND THE HISTORICAL PICTURE

Like the Companions, the Brothers of the Prophet (Ikhwan-e-Rasool) will also have a significant role in dawah work in the last phase of human history.

Today the Companions of the Prophet are held in great honour. But this picture was formed after historical grandeur was attached to their names. The Companions of the Prophet appeared first like ordinary men to their contemporaries. Then, on the occasion of the signing of the treaty of Hudaibiyyah (6 AH), the Prophet of Islam held negotiations with the Quraysh. At that time, the Prophet was accompanied by fourteen hundred Companions, and the representative of the Quraysh, Urwah ibn Masood As-Saqafi, referred to them with contempt as a mere crowd. (*As-Seerah An-Nabawiya*, Ibn Kathir, Vol. 3, p. 331)

Later, the same will occur in the case of the *Ikhwan-e-Rasool* (Brothers of the Prophet). Their contemporaries will fail to recognize them. This is a general human

weakness, borne out by the well-known saying: “A prophet is never honoured in his land.” (*Mark*, 6:4). This is because individuals and groups with a special mission are seen by their contemporaries as ordinary men. But in later times, historical grandeur is attached to their names. For later generations, their names conjure up the image of historical persons or groups rather than what they were to their contemporaries. This difference between the actual person and the historical person will again emerge. Thus, people will accord great honour and greatness to the Companions of the Prophet, but they will ignore the *Ikhwan-e-Rasool*, holding them to be inferior, they being their contemporaries.

SUPPORT PROVIDED BY SECULAR CIVILIZATION

The scientific revolution greatly facilitated the performance of dawah work. For the first time in human history, the word of God could be effectively disseminated to the people globally.

According to a tradition of the Prophet: “God will surely provide support for this religion through secular persons.” (*Al-Mu’jam Al-Kabir*, Al-Tabarani, Hadith No.14640) The word ‘fajir’ used in this Hadith does not mean a wrongdoer but is used for a secular person, a non-believer, or a non-Muslim. When we study history, we find it replete with incidents where a non-Muslim or secular person supported God’s religion. For example, there was the guidance given by Abdullah ibn Arqat during the Prophet’s migration, and Quzman al-Zufri’s joining the Companions of the Prophet in the Battle of Khaybar, etc.

The most outstanding example of support given by secular persons came about in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries AD—an age illuminated by the

discovery of the hidden secrets of nature, thanks to the extraordinary efforts of Western thinkers and scientists, who, in the main, remained secular in their outlook. In the wake of these discoveries, Western civilization rose to great heights of technological sophistication and remained directed toward secular ends. As such, it could facilitate the performance of dawah work. As a result, for the first time in human history, the word of God could be effectively disseminated to the people of the world, a process referred to in the Hadith as ‘taking the word of God to all homes.’

No longer the communication of the message of God constrained by geographical impediments, as happened in the case of Uqbah ibn Nafi Tabii (d. 683 AD), who successfully performed dawah work traveling on horseback across Africa, only to find himself halted on the west coast by the Atlantic Ocean, which at that time no one had the means to cross. (*Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, Ibn Athir, Vol. 3 p. 206)

The new opportunities offered by Western Civilization were mainly of two kinds. One may be called the theoretical or ideological aspect. That is, the opening up of new opportunities in respect of secular ideology brought complete religious freedom into existence,

fostered the spirit of inquiry at a general level, and encouraged the objective study of religion, etc. The most remarkable event in this connection was the discovery of the laws hidden in nature as a result of scientific research. These discoveries were like an unveiling of the wonders of God and made it possible to substantiate monotheistic belief by the scientific criterion established by man himself. It was this great *dawah* opportunity becoming a reality in the future, which was predicted thus in the Quran: "We shall show them our signs in the universe and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that this is the truth." (41:53)

The second form of opportunity offered by Western Civilization is to communicate the divine message globally by using modern technology. An event of primary importance in this connection was the invention of the printing press in the eighteenth century. This technology made possible the transition from the verbal communication of *dawah* to the use of the printed word. Of even greater importance is the development of modern communications. Modern communications and digital media in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have, for the first time in the real sense, made it possible for the divine message to be communicated not only at a global level but also

with such rapidity that the matter of time becomes irrelevant. In effect, now instant communication of the word of God has become a possibility. This extraordinary progress was made at the behest of God to enable the dayees (*Ikhwan* of the latter phase) to perform the role of spreading the divine message effectively at a global level.

ROLE OF MODERN EDUCATION

Modern academic institutions have deconditioned the mindset of students, enabling them to think with open minds by discarding their prejudices, and seeing things as they are.

The coming into existence of a group of Companions of the Prophet in the seventh century was no simple event. Only after a long historical process, with divine support, were the Ishmaelites produced by the rough training peculiar to desert conditions. What set this race apart was that it was free from the conditioning of any unnatural environment. As such, they possessed the unique capacity to accept the truth. This ability has been described in the Quran in symbolic language: “The (luminous) oil is as if ready to burn without even the fire touching it.” (24:35)

In the twentieth century, this de-conditioning process occurred for another reason. It stemmed from a secular civilization that promoted secular education and secular thought. But unfortunately, certain leaders have a very negative perception of secular educational institutions, calling them slaughterhouses.

Their thinking on modern secular civilization is similar. But it would be more appropriate to say that they are institutions that promote de-conditioning. What these current academic institutions have done is radically alter the mindset of the students, thus enabling them to discard their prejudices, think with open minds, and see things as they are. This task of de-conditioning has been performed by modern secular civilization. It is a supportive factor that has emerged due to a special divine plan.

Those who have received their education in modern secular institutions are the “Ishmaelites” of the present times. Thanks to their training, these people are unbiased and capable of understanding the truth if offered to them in purity. Therefore, they can think about it without prejudice and accept it. Thus, this generation is capable of playing the role of the Brothers of the Prophet.

ROLE OF THE BROTHERS OF THE PROPHET

The Brothers of the Prophet will attain the realization of God at a higher level by uncovering the signs of God hidden in nature and will spread the divine message globally.

The Prophet of Islam started his dawah mission in 610 AD in Makkah. The Prophet being the final messenger, God decreed a powerful team of followers for him, known as the Companions. According to a prediction of the Prophet, during the last phase of human history, a powerful team of his followers would also be formed: this team is called *Ikhwan-e-Rasool*, the Brothers of the Prophet. With God's exceptional support, this second team will play an important role during the last phase.

Both these groups are referred to in the Quran. We learn of this reality from a study of the last verses of chapter 48. The verses read as follows:

“Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Those with him are firm and unyielding towards

those who deny the truth but compassionate towards one another. You see them bowing and prostrating themselves, seeking the grace of God and His good will. Their marks are on their faces, the traces of their prostrations; they are described in the Torah and the Gospel as being like a seed which sends forth its shoot, then makes it strong, becomes thick, and stands firm on its stem, delighting the sowers. He seeks to enrage the disbelievers through them. God has promised forgiveness and a great reward to those who believe and do good works.” (48:29)

In these verses, the Quran, referring to the Torah and the Bible, describes the individual character of the Companions, which found expression in their ability to recognize the Prophet of Islam on merit and support him without reservation. They were highly principled men, true worshippers, totally trusting God. The present Torah uses the word ‘saints’ for them. (*Deuteronomy*, 33:2)

In the Bible, Jesus Christ mentions the Companions of the Prophet using the simile of a tree (*Matthew*, 13: 31-32), symbolizing a historical process. One role of the Companions of the Prophet was performed in their times. Another role was that which was accomplished

in the form of the process. The revolutionary role of the Companions set in motion a process in history that went on growing in later generations in various forms.

Four thousand years ago, a process of history was initiated in the desert of Arabia through Hajira and Ishmael. The group of the Companions of the Prophet in the seventh century culminated in this process. Another historical process began in the seventh century with the revolutionary mission of the Companions of the Prophet. The work of the Brothers of the Prophet will be the culmination of this second historical process.

It would appear from the traditions that this group, the Brothers of the Prophet, was to emerge in the scientific age. This group will be able to realize God at a higher level because of the knowledge accumulating from scientific research, which uncovers the signs of God hidden in nature. Equipped with new and powerful means of functioning in the form of technology, these people can perform the work at a global level. It is this process which is called in a Hadith, the entry of the word of God into all homes. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 23814)

ROLE OF THE BELIEVERS OF LATER TIMES

The Companions of the Prophet and the Brothers of the Prophet share the same motivation: to avail of the opportunities in their respective eras to promote the cause of religion.

The believers in later times have been described as bearers of high levels of faith. Certain traditions illustrate this. For example, according to Anas bin Malik, a Companion of the Prophet, the Prophet said, ‘The example of my *ummah* is like rains, nobody knows which phase, earlier or later, will be better.’ (*At-Tirmizi*, Hadith No. 2869)

In this Hadith, the simile of the rain denotes a whole historical process. The revolution brought about in the seventh century by the Prophet and his Companions was, in one sense, the beginning of a process. The historical process which set in in the wake of this revolution was to yield the final result in the future. “Future” here probably means the same historical phenomenon referred to in another tradition as *Ikhwan-e-Rasool* (Brothers of the Prophet).

Malik al-Ashari says that the Prophet of Islam once said: “There are some such believers as are neither prophets nor martyrs, but even prophets and martyrs will envy them, because of their status and nearness to God, on the Day of Judgement.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 22894)

In these traditions, it is most likely that the believers mentioned therein, who will be born in the age of science, are the group called the “Brothers of the Prophet”. Owing to the discoveries of nature, a new societal framework will come into existence, by availing of which it will become possible for them to experience higher levels of realization.

In one respect, the Companions of the Prophet and the Brothers of the Prophet share the same motivation: to avail of the opportunities in their respective eras to promote the peaceful message of Islam. Therefore, the Companions of the Prophet used whatever opportunities were available in ancient times. For their part, the Brothers of the Prophet will avail of the opportunities available in the scientific age of later times for spreading the word of God. In my view, there will perhaps be three ways in which the Brothers of the Prophet will avail of the prevailing opportunities:

1. The use of scientific arguments made possible by scientific discoveries in nature. For instance, substantiating by modern data, the argument from design offered by the philosophers and theologians to prove the existence of God and give arguments to support the veracity of religious Truths.
2. The use of modern communications to take the divine message to a global level, such as print and electronic media and other means of digital communication and technology.
3. Making full use of the religious freedom gained in later times for the peaceful propagation of this work globally so that the divine message enters every home—big or small.

MISSION OF THE MUSLIM *UMMAH*

The Quran was revealed for all mankind. In the last phase of human history, the Brothers of the Prophet will find new opportunities to take the message of the Quran to the world.

The Quran has this to say, “Blessed be He who has revealed the criterion (the Quran) to His servant that he may warn the nations.” (25:1) We learn from this verse that the Quran has been specifically designed for communication of its message at a global level.

The Quran was revealed in the first quarter of the seventh century. For the first thousand years of its existence, there were no means of sending its message across the globe. There were no printed copies of the Quran, rapid transportation systems, and modern communication systems. Different languages are spoken in every region of the world. No international language existed into which the Quran could be translated and made accessible to people everywhere. With such a state of affairs, how could it have been possible to fulfill the very purpose of the revelation

of the Quran, that is, to convey the word of God worldwide? We find the answer to this question in another verse of the Quran:

“Say, ‘This Quran has been revealed to me so that through it I may warn you and whomever it reaches.’ (6:19)

The Prophet of Islam warned the people of his generation, and the believers who follow him will keep warning the people of their times in succeeding generations. This shows that the Prophet was responsible for conveying the message of the Quran to his contemporaries. Subsequently, it was the permanent responsibility of the *ummah* to keep conveying the message of the Quran to people of all ages. In this way, every generation of this *ummah* is duty-bound to keep conveying the Quranic message to people just as the Prophet had done in his time.

The dissemination of the Quranic message is to be done in every generation. In the early stages, those who did this work were called Companions (*Sahaba*), Companion’s disciples (*Tabiin*), and the commentators of the Quran (*Mufassirin*), etc. Similarly, in the last phase of human history, there will be a particular group who will avail of the new-found opportunities for spreading the divine message

and will perform this task at a global level. This particular group has been called *Ikhwan* (Brothers of the Prophet). (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 249) Conveying the divine message to all mankind is the mission of the Muslim *Ummah*.

SECULAR CIVILIZATION, SPIRITUAL CIVILIZATION

God has created the jinn and mankind so that they may discover God. The way to God-realization is through contemplation. That is, to discover God through the reflection of His creation and then build one's life accordingly.

In the Quran, God said, "I created the jinn and mankind only so that they might worship Me" (51: 56). 'Worship' in this verse means realization. God has created the jinn and mankind so that they may discover God. The way to God-realization is through contemplation. That is, to discover God through the reflection of His creation and then build one's life accordingly.

There is a famous saying regarding the purpose of creation: "God said that He was a hidden treasure, then He wanted to be known, so He created man for this purpose." (*Kashful Khifa*, Hadith No. 2016) This saying of an *Arif* (one who has realized God) is, in fact, a commentary on this verse of the Quran.

God first created jinn. He desired that they discover the hidden secrets of nature and proclaim God's glory.

But the story of Iblis, the chief of the jinns, shows that they adopted the attitude of 'I am better than he is' (7:12) and failed to realize God's greatness and glory. In other words, the jinns glorified themselves but failed to discover God's glory. Subsequently, God created man to succeed the jinns and accomplish the task of realizing God. But the angels could not understand this point at that time. So they raised doubts, saying that just as the jinns had failed to fulfill their creation's purpose, so would man fail to do so.

To remove the doubts of the angels, God gave a demonstration, which is briefly mentioned in the Quran: "He taught Adam all the names" (2:31). In this verse, "names" refer to the knowledge of things. By way of additional blessing, God granted man knowledge of all things. He inculcated the knowledge of all creation in his nature. In this way, at the unconscious level, man became potentially conscious of all things. God temporarily demonstrated this before the angels, and they were satisfied.

From these verses of the Quran, we learn that the jinns were given brains but not knowledge of things. They were required to use their brains to discover the marvels hidden in the universe. They had to turn their ignorance into knowledge by pondering over things. But they failed to do so.

Later, God created man with additional qualities that would enable him to discover the universal phenomena that had already been instilled in their unconscious minds. This is mentioned in the Quran: “But the Quran is a revelation that is clear to the hearts of those endowed with knowledge.” (29:49). All the objects to be realized already exist in the unconscious mind of man. So now, man is only required to convert the unconscious into the conscious.

DISCOVERY INVOLVES UNFOLDING OF THE MIND

God has placed the knowledge of all things in man's unconscious mind. Therefore, discovery is only an unfolding of the mind which can be scientific or spiritual in nature.

On further reflection, we find that what is called discovery in science is not a discovery but an unfolding. That is, what already exists potentially, has to be turned into actuality. The jinns had to discover something not inculcated in their nature, so they failed. That is why God made this easy for the next beings He created. He made the things known to man at the conscious level, which were already there at an unconscious level.

It is said of science that every discovery in science is a matter of chance. That is, scientists, by accident, discover things.

It would be more appropriate to say that scientific discoveries are not one of an accident but instead of a coincidence. That is, in the process of some

experiment, an idea illuminates the mind of the scientist. This flash of inspiration coincides with some knowledge in his unconscious. Then after study and observation, he arrives at the point of a 'new' reality: this is what is called discovery.

For instance, a scientist was once observing a covered pot of water which was being heated. When the heat reached 100 degrees Celsius, the boiling water's steam raised the pot's lid. The scientist began to reflect on this and finally discovered that when the temperature of the water increases, its molecules break up and disintegrate in gaseous form, and with this molecular disintegration, steam power is produced. With this power, engines can be moved. The idea of this property of water already existed in man's unconscious mind. This observation coincided with the idea in his mind; as a result, man discovered what is known today as steam power. In this way, it would be more appropriate to say that 'discoveries are the results of coincidences.'

God has placed the knowledge of all things in man's unconscious mind. Therefore, discovery is only an unfolding of the mind which can be scientific or spiritual in nature.

MEANS OF GOD-REALIZATION

Realization is to discover the Creator by pondering over His creation. Such contemplation allows man to discover the prior knowledge stored in his unconscious mind.

What are the means of attaining God-realization? The way of realization is to think about one's existence and natural phenomena. In this way, one discovers the secret of realization by pondering both physical and human nature.

A fifty-fifty combination of external observation and intuition accounts for the arrival at this source of realization.

Much of the knowledge of things is attributable to intuition, and through contemplation, man discovers the coincidence between observation and prior knowledge stored in the unconscious. Moreover, this discovery is made continuously; thus, a believer's journey of realization continues uninterruptedly.

The attainment of realization is not mysterious in nature. It is to discover the Creator by pondering over His creation. This process started in the

seventh century with the advent of Islam, when the Quran influenced people to think about the things of the universe from the viewpoint of realisation. For instance, Abu Zar Ghifari, a Companion of the Prophet, says: “The Prophet of Islam used to remind us of some knowledge (of realisation) even at the flight of a bird in the air. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 21361)

The Muslims, having received the Prophet’s training in finding the way to God-realization through contemplation of creation, this process was given a significant impetus and continued for several centuries. This is an argument based on the reasoning in *Ilm al-Kalam* (Theology). But in this science, or knowledge of realisation, the Muslims failed to go beyond a specific limit because, in ancient times, there was only a traditional mental framework within which contemplation could take place. This conventional framework made the observation and experiment possible only within a limited sphere.

Much broader contemplation became possible in modern times when the telescope and the microscope were invented. For the first time in 1609, Galileo used the telescope for astronomical studies. The microscope had been invented about twenty years before this. After these developments, it became possible to delve deeper into the micro and macro

worlds. Those aspects of realisation that had so far been hidden from man's eyes now came under his direct observation.

In later times, this task was performed entirely by the West. The results of the investigations into nature conducted by Western scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries opened up vast doors to the realisation of God. Consequently, for the first time in human history, what earlier only had the status of a creed became a scientific fact. (For details, see the author's book *God Arises*)

The task performed by Western scientists in present times has been gigantic regarding the knowledge of realisation. There is a Hadith that God will even let the non-believers support His religion. (*Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir*, Al-Tabarani, Hadith No.14640) This Hadith applies to Western scientists.

A FALLACY

The discoveries in modern science were the wonders of God. Nature is so well designed that it is inconceivable that it should have no designer.

The discoveries in modern science were, in fact, discoveries of the wonders of God. They amounted to an opening of a treasure house of the realization of the Creator. But because the Western scholars who worked in this field were all of a secular mind, their discoveries, in effect, came to support secular theories and ideas instead of providing academic support for the realization of God. However, this secularization of science was nothing but a fallacy.

For instance, a Western thinker writes of the discoveries in modern science that reveal that a law of causation governs nature and that if events are the results of natural causes, they are not supernatural.

But this is a fallacy. The law of nature is not an explanation in itself; it needs an explanation. This being so, it would be more appropriate to say: "If laws control events, then there must be a controller of laws."

Albert Einstein (d. 1955), the world-famous German scientist, studied the system of nature and found that it had a significant design. In this way, he almost reached the door of realization (of God) but did not accept it, so he said: "The most incomprehensible part of nature is that it is comprehensible."

This is indeed a fallacious statement. When Einstein saw great meaningfulness in nature, he should have instead said: "Nature is so well designed that it is inconceivable that it should have no designer."

PHASE OF PARADISE

The discovery of God should be so profound for us that our entire lives should come under divine influence in every respect so that we may become God-oriented people.

The following are some verses from chapter 18 of the Quran:

“Those who believe and do good works shall have the gardens of Paradise for their abode.”

“They shall forever dwell in the gardens of Paradise, desiring no change.”

“Tell them, ‘If the ocean became ink for writing the words of my Lord, surely the ocean would be exhausted before the words of my Lord came to an end—even if We were to add another ocean to it.’” (18:107-109)

There are four parts to these verses. In the first part, the reference to “those who believe and do good works” tells us that according to the creation plan of God, it is those who are favoured by God who can discover the Creator. This discovery should be so

profound that their lives should come under divine influence in every respect. They may become God-oriented people in the complete sense. It is people such as those who will be held deserving, that is, of the greatest reward by God in the Hereafter.

The second part of these verses says: "They shall have the gardens of Paradise for their abode," showing that God-oriented people will be allowed to settle eternally in the ideal world of Paradise.

According to the Lord's scheme of things, the people of Paradise will lead a fully active life therein. This life will be free from all kinds of hardship and boredom. It will be a life of pleasurable activities. (36:55)

The third feature of this heavenly life will be that "they shall forever dwell in the garden of Paradise, desiring no change." They will remain there eternally yet will never find their existence tedious. In the ultimate sense, they will remain forever engaged in enjoyable activities. These activities will never cease, nor will they be limited. Therefore, this joy and happiness of the people of Paradise will be quite unalloyed and eternal.

The fourth part of this Quranic statement is: "If the ocean became ink for writing the words of my Lord,

surely the ocean will be exhausted before the words of my Lord came to an end—even if We were to add another ocean to it.” These words of the Quran tell us the highest degree to which the people of Paradise will remain engaged in an existence of total pleasure and happiness.

This activity amounts to discovering the word of God and remaining engaged in an unending journey of the higher realization of God.

What is most appealing to man is that his desires will be granted, and he will experience total fulfillment as regards the material requirements of life. All his demands will be met in Paradise in the ideal sense. The Quran is specific on this: “Therein you shall have all that your souls desire, and therein you shall have all that you ask for.” (41:31)

MISSION OF THE PEOPLE OF PARADISE

The present world allows us to prove our eligibility for Paradise, and the Hereafter is the period in which we will be granted Paradise.

Another great thing the man of Paradise shall have to do is continuously discover the various aspects of realization. This ‘realization’ is expressed in different ways: “The words of the Lord” (18:109), “the Lord’s wonders” (55:30), “signs of the Lord” (41:53), etc. The Creator who has created this meaningful universe is Himself, undoubtedly, more meaningful than thousands of such meaningful universes. A very tiny part of this meaningfulness has been discovered by modern science, but scientists have acknowledged that these discoveries are so insignificant that they may be likened to knowing more and more about less and less.

The discovery of such an infinitely meaningful Creator will be an experience that is simultaneously most joyous and unending. It is this joyous mission in which the people of Paradise will be engaged forever.

Man is another name for the mind. The mind's job is to think. The thinking capacity of the mind is unlimited. A scientist once said that the number of particles found in the entire universe is to be found in the individual brain itself. Man's mind is unlimited, but his age is limited. This means that no one can achieve intellectual fulfillment in the present world, although it is what man desires the most. Man's utmost pleasure derives from using his mind and making discoveries. Discovery is the greatest joy for man, and it is this joy that he fails to find in this world.

God's creation plan is the answer to this question. God's creation plan tells us that human life does not end at death but will continue eternally after death. Therefore, the world after death is not only eternal but also ideal.

In this next world, man will have every opportunity to unfold his mind and prolong his creativity eternally. He will live continuously in an environment of thrilling discoveries.

This endless opportunity will be available to man in Paradise in the Hereafter. Paradise is not simply a place for enjoying a luxurious life. The more important aspect of Paradise is that, in the heavenly vastness of Paradise, all those factors will be present

in an ultimately ideal form that were available in this world in an imperfect state. According to the Quran, man has been given everything in this world, but only in accordance with his needs (14:34). However, in the Hereafter, all this will be given according to man's desire. (41:31)

Man is an idealist by birth. All men and women are, by their nature, perfectionists. But experience shows that no one in this world can find the ideal. Every man is seeking something unattainable in this world. In other words, man is a Paradise-seeking animal.

This Paradise will be available to man only in the Hereafter and only to those who prove themselves deserving of being lodged in Paradise. The present world allows us to prove our eligibility for Paradise, and the Hereafter is the period in which we will be granted Paradise.

PERIOD OF THE RIGHTEOUS

The Righteous shall inherit Paradise, free from all kinds of fear and sorrow. In Paradise, they will have unlimited pleasure, where they will unfold the wonders of God for all eternity.

In Chapter 21 of the Quran, a prediction is thus expressed: “We have already written in the *Psalms* the following reminder, ‘My righteous servants shall inherit the earth’” (21:105). This prediction is thus expressed in the Bible:

“But the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell in it forever.” (*Psalms*, 37:28-29)

In this verse of the Quran, ‘the righteous’ means the selected believers from the entire human history. This event will take place in the next world. After Doomsday, all the humans born on the earth will be gathered together on the Day of Gathering. Almighty God, accompanied by the angels, will then make His appearance.

The verdict on the eternal future of man will be given according to the record of his deeds before death.

Some will stand rejected; others will be selected for their good deeds. The selected will gain entry to eternal Paradise, which will be a perfect world in all respects. This heavenly world will be made eternally free from all fear and sorrow. All the righteous men and women who can enter this world will experience complete fulfillment.

This heavenly phase will be an ideal one. This will be the final destination of man for which the world was created. Therefore, the building of the present world and the settling of human beings here was meant to test them in practical life and select those unique individuals who can live at the highest level of realization: that is to say, those who possess a positive personality in the total sense of the expression; those who adhere entirely to divine discipline, despite having the freedom and power to disobey; those who, because of their noble qualities, can live in the vicinity of God; those who in respect of their creation, are humans, but in respect of their qualities, are like angels; those who are the essence of the entire universe, just as the rose is the essence of the whole bush.

These fortunate souls will remain eternally in Paradise. Paradise is a place of comfort and luxury and of the most refined activities. Therefore, the good

people will enjoy Paradise's pleasant life as a matter of divine hospitality.

The light of God will become known through the activities of the people of Paradise: this will take the form of an eternal process. In Paradise, the culture of *Alhamdulillah* (praise be to God) will materialize in the perfect form. For the people of Paradise, all the activities will be so enjoyable that they will never feel any tedium or fatigue.

This world of Paradise may be described as spiritual or divine—a superior form of civilization. This phase has been initiated in the present world. But the present world is limited; the divine civilization can flourish here only on a limited scale. In the unlimited world of the Hereafter, the divine civilization will flourish in its ultimate form. The believers will continue to unfold the wonders of God for all eternity. In Paradise, every day will be a day of discoveries, bringing unlimited pleasure. This will never come to an end. It will continue for all eternity.

LAST WORD

The Prophet's Companions used the opportunities offered by the ancient civilization. The Brothers of the Prophet will avail of the opportunities the scientific age offers.

According to a verse of the Quran, God “created death and life so that He might test you, and find out which of you is best in conduct” (67:2). The present world is, therefore, a selection ground to select people to inhabit Paradise in the world Hereafter. Here, man is placed in a free environment to find out who proves himself to be the best in conduct so that God may find him eligible for inhabiting eternal Paradise. Making man aware of this reality was the mission of all prophets, including Prophet Muhammad, who was the last prophet. God preserved His guidance through him in the form of the Quran.

The Prophet being the final messenger, God decreed a powerful team of followers for him, known as the Companions. In the last phase of human history, a powerful team of his followers would also be formed, called *Ikhwan-e-Rasool*, the Brothers of the Prophet.

They will be people from the Muslim *Ummah* from the last phase of human history. With God's special support, this second team will play an important dawah role.

To fulfill this role, Muslims must first attain a higher realization of God by contemplating of His creation. Then, equipped with new and powerful means of functioning, they need to dedicate themselves to performing dawah work globally by taking the preserved message of God for humanity to the world. That is why believers in later times have been described as bearers of high levels of faith. Certain traditions illustrate this.

According to Anas bin Malik, a Companion of the Prophet, the Prophet said, 'The example of my *ummah* is like rains; nobody knows which phase, earlier or later, will be better.' (*At-Tirmizi*, Hadith No. 2869)

In this Hadith, the simile of the rain denotes a whole historical process. The revolution brought about in the seventh century by the Prophet and his Companions was, in one sense, the beginning of a process. The historical process that set in in the wake of this revolution was to yield the final result in the future. "Future" here probably means the same historical phenomenon referred to in another tradition as *Ikhwan-e-Rasool* (Brothers of the Prophet).

Abu Maalik al-Ashari says that the Prophet of Islam

once said: “There are such believers as are neither prophets nor martyrs, but even prophets and martyrs will envy them, because of their status and nearness to God, on the Day of Judgement.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 22894)

In these traditions, it is most likely that the believers mentioned therein, who will be born in the age of science, are the group called the “Brothers of the Prophet”. Owing to the discoveries of nature, a new framework will come into existence, by availing of which it will become possible for them to experience higher levels of realization.

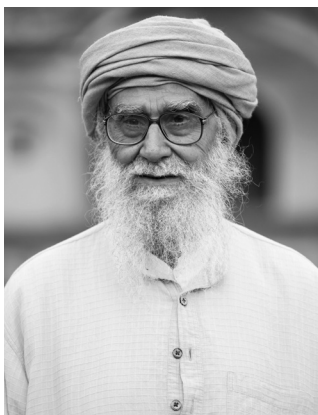
In one respect, the Companions of the Prophet and the Brothers of the Prophet share the same motivation: to avail of the opportunities in their respective eras to promote the cause of religion. Therefore, the Companions of the Prophet used whatever opportunities the ancient civilization of the Ishmaelites offered. For their part, the Brothers of the Prophet will avail of the opportunities for dawah work made possible in the scientific age of later times. In my view, there will perhaps be three ways in which the Brothers of the Prophet will avail of the prevailing opportunities:

1. The use of scientific arguments made possible by scientific discoveries in nature. For instance,

substantiating by modern data, the argument from design offered by the philosophers and theologians to prove the existence of God and give arguments to support the veracity of religious Truths.

2. The use of modern communications for conveying the divine message at a global level, such as print and electronic media, and other digital communication and technology.
3. Making full use of the religious freedom available in later times for the peaceful propagation of the call to God so that the divine message enters every home—big or small.

The Quran was revealed for all mankind. Therefore, the mission of the Muslim *Ummah* is to take the Quran to all humanity. In the last phase of human history, certain believers rising to the status of the Brothers of the Prophet will find and avail of the new-found opportunities to take the message of the Quran into every home—big or small—in the world. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 23814)



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021) was an Islamic scholar, spiritual leader, and peace activist. His English translation of the Quran and its Commentary are widely appreciated for their simplicity, clarity, and ease of understanding. He has authored over 200 books; and two magazines, *Spirit of Islam* and *Al-Risala*; and recorded thousands of video and audio

lectures. Demonstrating the relevance of Islam in the modern idiom, this material delves into Islam's spiritual wisdom, the Prophet's non-violent approach, its relationship with modernity, and other contemporary issues.

For his seminal contributions to world peace, Maulana received numerous national and international awards including the 'Demiurges Peace International Award' by the Nuclear Disarmament Forum AG under the patronage of the former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev (2002). The Government of India honoured him with the 'Padma Vibhushan Award' (2021), and the 'Padma Bhushan Award' (2000) for his contributions to spirituality. He was also the recipient of the 'Rajiv Gandhi Sadbhavna Award' (2010), the 'Communal Harmony Award' (2000), and the 'National Citizen's Award' by Mother Teresa (1996), to name a few. In 2001, Maulana founded the *Centre for Peace and Spirituality International* which is actively carrying his legacy forward by distributing copies of the Quran and peacefully conveying the spiritual message of Islam at a global level.

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The present world is a selection ground. Here man is placed in a free environment so that God can find out who is eligible to inhabit Paradise. Making man aware of this reality was the mission of all prophets. Prophet Muhammad was the final messenger. God preserved His guidance through him in the form of the Quran. The Quran is for all humanity and must be taken into every home. In the last phase of human history, certain believers called the Brothers of the Prophet in a tradition will attain the realization of God at a higher level, and take the preserved message of God to all humanity using modern communication and technology. This is the mission of the Muslim Ummah.

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