



GOD-ORIENTED  
LIFE

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

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*Translated by:*  
Prof. Farida Khanam

*Edited by:*  
Dr. Naghma Siddiqi  
Dr. Maria Khan

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e-mail: [info@goodwordbooks.com](mailto:info@goodwordbooks.com)

### **Centre for Peace and Spirituality International**

1, Nizamuddin West Market, New Delhi-110013

e-mail: [info@cpsglobal.org](mailto:info@cpsglobal.org)

[www.cpsglobal.org](http://www.cpsglobal.org)

### **Goodword Books**

A-21, Sector 4, Noida-201301

Delhi NCR, India

e-mail: [info@goodwordbooks.com](mailto:info@goodwordbooks.com)

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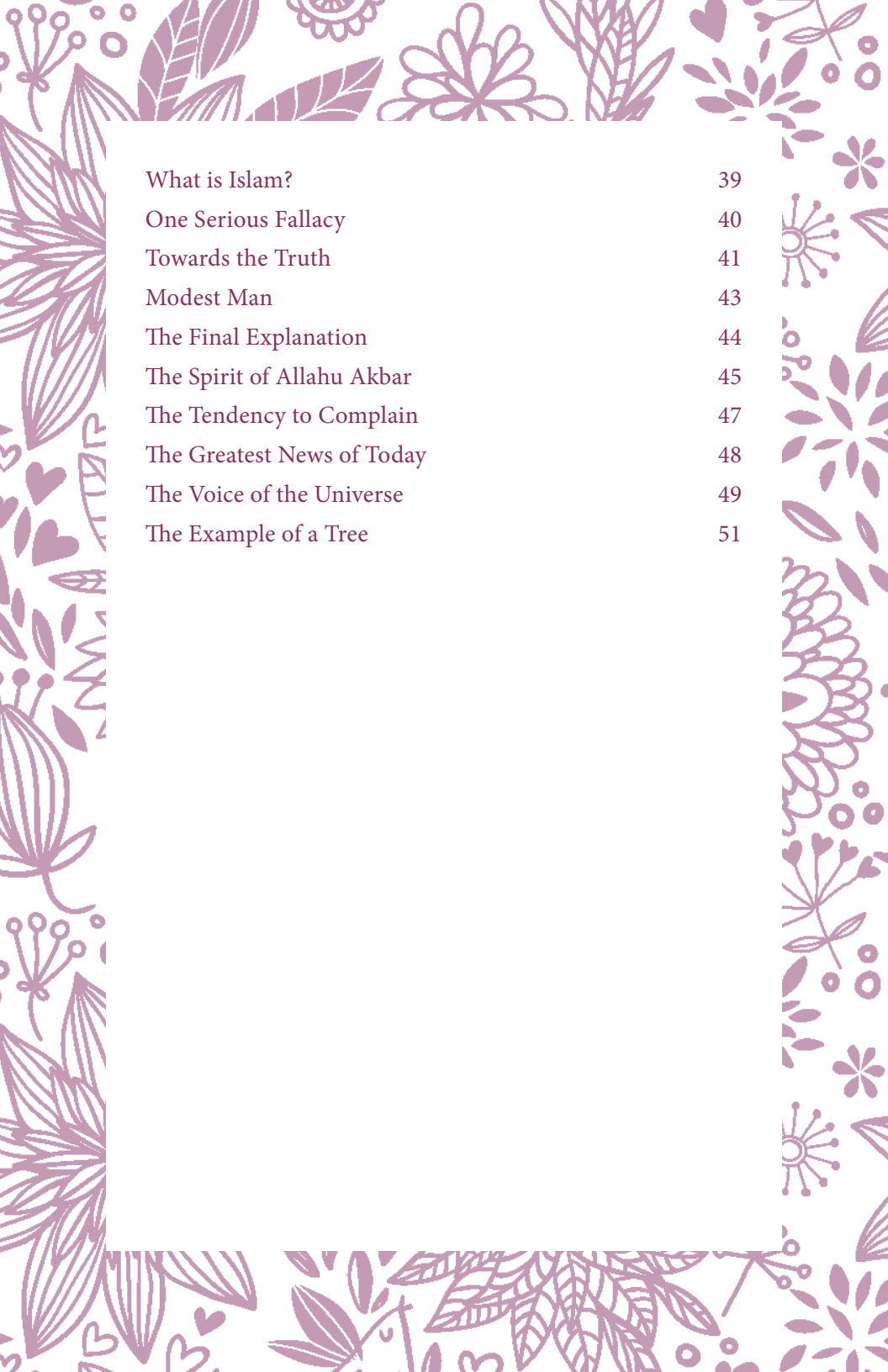
2665 Byberry Road, Bensalem, PA 19020

e-mail: [kkaleemuddin@gmail.com](mailto:kkaleemuddin@gmail.com)

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## Foreword



The literal meaning of Islam is submission, that is, submission to God's will. Submission, in fact, is the name of that natural response from a person to God, the response that is expressed by human beings after their realization of God. It is with this submission that that life has developed which is called a religious life. A person's quest does not stop here but rather becomes a part of his life in the form of a process of discovery. Now, he discovers his relationship with God. In the process, he realizes that he is not free but has to act at God's behest and be accountable to Him. This makes him live a God-oriented life.

He discovers that death is not the end of his life, for, another life begins after death, where he will stand before God, so that God may declare His final decision about his eternal future. This process of discovery continues until he realizes that the end of his life is going to culminate in the form of either eternal Paradise or eternal Hell. This quest makes him extremely serious about the course his life should take. Now he plans his life anew. Now he redefines everything. If at first all his activities were self-oriented, now they are God-oriented. It is this very lifestyle which is called Islam.

Wahiduddin Khan

January 20, 2021  
New Delhi



## Two Arrangements



God has created man with special blessings, which are basically of two kinds. One of them is called the “best of mould” in the Quran (95:4). The other blessing has been thus referred to in the Quran: “He has given you all that you asked of Him.” (14:34) The “best of mould” has also been referred to in the Quran as “best form” (40:64). This means that man has been granted a perfect physique.

The human body is regulated, moreover, by a number of organs, which enable sight, hearing, breathing, speech, digestion, blood circulation and movement. All of these are essential for the survival of human life and, if these systems were ever disturbed or deteriorated and became non-functional, human life would come to an end. Other blessings which have been provided in the outside world, external to human existence, make up the life support system. They include the system of light and heat, the supply of oxygen, rains, agriculture, etc. Human life depends for its continuance upon both the internal organ support system and the external life support system.

A deeper knowledge of these natural processes opens the door to the realization of God. As a result, profound feelings of thankfulness are engendered, which give





birth to all manner of positive qualities like modesty, seriousness, willingness to accept the truth, and so on.

## The Miracle of Creation



**M**an is a masterpiece of the creative power of God. In this vast universe no creature like man exists. This has been mentioned in the Quran in different ways. We learn from the Quran that “We have honoured the children of Adam ... and exalted them above many of Our creatures.” (17:70). In the same vein God says: “We have indeed created man in the best of mould.” (95:4) Furthermore: “He shaped you, formed you well, and provided you with good things.” (40:64)

A human being undoubtedly is the greatest masterpiece of divine creation. If you apprehend your existence in this way, you will have a great surge of feelings of acknowledgement of God. In your inner self, you will feel that God’s blessings upon you are so great that to describe it, no human words are sufficient. This discovery will give you a great point of reference for prayer. You will call out: “O God, you showered me with such great blessings in this world, will you deprive me of Your blessings in the world Hereafter? Will You consign Your masterpiece to hellfire?”

But it is strange how people have failed to recognize themselves as masterpieces of divine creation. Everyone



attributes all greatness to himself—as a matter of personal achievement. As a result, everyone lives in and for his own self. Everyone takes the high ground of pride. Everyone, consciously or unconsciously, thinks that he is all in all. There are other types of people who are given to the cult of personalities. When they see greatness in their saints or gurus, they attribute it to those human beings and then start worshipping or revering them. The greatness that they should have attributed to the Creator they have attributed instead to the creature. As a result, they have stooped to the worship of the creation rather than the Creator.

## Control Over the Universe



**T**he words of the 2nd verse of the Quran: “Praise be to God, the Lord of the Universe” (1:2) are in actual fact, a person’s spontaneous utterance when he observes the universe. Telescopic observation tells us that the universe is, to an unimaginable extent, vast and majestic. Moreover, microscopic studies tell us that the unobservable universe is as majestic as the observable universe. In spite of all progress made by humanity, man has not yet succeeded in apprehending either the vastness or the grandeur of the universe.

This vast and unfathomable universe is continuously in motion. At every moment, extremely meaningful



events are taking place. Further study tells us that this vast universe is totally faultless. The universe can continually remain in a faultless state, only when there is not even the most minute alteration in its system. Even the tiniest deviation in the universe can disturb its entire system.

Modern studies tell us that in spite of the universe being vast to an unimaginable extent, it is entirely harmonious in its functioning. That is because it is completely controlled by a single force. All its parts are perfectly connected with one another.

On seeing this universal harmoniousness, scientists find it astonishing. They do not know how to explain this extraordinary feature. This perfect harmony in the universe is a proof that it is functioning under an All-Powerful Creator. Had this not been so, the whole universe would be reduced to ultimate chaos. This perfect harmony prevailing in the universe is possible only because its Controller possesses the attribute of Omnipotence.

## The Beginning of Realization



**T**he Quran states: “We have created man into a life of toil and trial. Does he think then that no one has power over him?” (90:4-5)



The law of the present world is so designed that man must inevitably undergo hardships. No one is exempt from this general law. This fact shows how helpless a human being is. In this world, it is only the Creator who is Almighty, All-Powerful. This contradistinction is final. No one is exempted from it (that is, God is All-Powerful and man is totally powerless).

The Quran states: Every human being is bound to taste death (3:185). It is a historical fact that whoever is born into this world has to die after a limited period of time.

The incidence of death bespeaks one's helplessness. This event proves that helplessness is man's lot in life. So far as power is concerned, none but the Creator has power. Both these experiences, for men and women alike, are of a proven finality. In this way, everyone can discover, in the light of his or her personal experiences, that he or she is in a position of total helplessness and, as compared to man, the Creator is Omnipotent.

This discovery is the beginning of realization. For one who makes this discovery, the journey towards the path of realization has been well and truly initiated. Subsequently, all other things, which are desirable in the divine way will become part of his or her life. This realization is like an intellectual revolution in that it colours one's entire life in the hue of God. (2:138)

## Mind and Religion



Chapter 38 of the Quran has this to say: “This is a blessed Book which We sent down to you [Muhammad], for people to ponder over its messages, and for those with understanding to take heed.” (38:29) From this verse we learn that the Quran is not meant merely for verbal recitation: it is for the reader to make use of his mind and reflect upon and ponder over its verses in order to learn the lessons hidden in the verses or between the lines.

There are many traditions of the Prophet as regards the importance of the mind. The wording of one of these is: “Everything has a pillar and the pillar of a believer is his reason or mind (*aql*).” (*Musad al-Haarith*, Hadith No. 840)

There is another hadith of relevance in which the Prophet of Islam observed: “Every verse of the Quran has an external aspect or form and an internal essence or inner aspect.” (*Musnad Abu Yala*, Hadith No. 5149)

The apparent meaning of the verses is understood by just reading the verses, but the deeper meaning can be arrived at only by employing reason, and pondering upon what one reads. The reader, thus, reaches the deeper level of the meaning of the verses by reflection. This deeper realization of the Quran produces sublime

feelings of faith in one. While without making use of reason, one arrives at a form of religion which is superficial. It is only by making use of reason that the seeker can find the true kernel of religion.

## Why should there be Trials?



When God's servant calls to his Lord, and if he is dear to God, He says, "O Gabriel, do not hurry to fulfil his desire. I like to listen to his voice." (*Al-Mojam al-Awsat, al-Tabrani*, Hadith No. 8442) In this tradition, the word 'voice' is not only a matter of utterance, but has a wider connotation. This voice is of one who has experienced trial according to the law of nature. His heart has been deeply affected by this experience, which has brought to him a storm of divine ideas. Through it he has discovered humility and the greatness of God. As a result, a new storm emerges in his spirit.

On such occasions, the words that come out of the mouth of a believer are unique, special words expressive of the glory of God. A believer becomes the envy of the whole universe at that particular moment. He remembers God in such a way that the earth and heaven also failed to do so. This is the highest form of divine remembrance of a creative nature.

Trial is a divine experience for a believer, leading to an increase in his sensitivity. At that time, the words



of prayer that come out of his mouth in remembering God, are not a mere repetition of words but, a form of religious creativity. He calls God in such divine spiritual words of which he himself had no prior knowledge. At that time, the words he utters are so noble that God himself loves to hear his voice.

## The Essence of Faith



As we know, faith has its own special flavour or innate characteristic quality. It is reported in a tradition that one who is willing to make God his Lord will savour that essence of faith. (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 34) Tastes vary considerably from each other. For example, God has created a number of fruits, each with its own individual flavour. For instance, the fig has a different taste from a date. Grapes have a taste not found in apples. A mango has a taste quite distinct from that of a banana. Each fruit has its own unique taste. When anyone eats a piece of fruit, he savours this individual taste. The same holds true of the essence of faith. For believers, God has bestowed upon happiness a taste which is absent from sorrow. Affluence has an innate quality missing from poverty. Health has a taste which illness does not have. The same goes for difficulty and ease. Moreover, faith may be better savoured in anonymity rather than in repute. Power has a taste

which powerlessness can never have on a parallel with strength vis-à-vis helplessness.

However, it depends upon a man's awareness whether he can savour faith in different situations. The ability to savour faith is not an unconditional bestowal. It comes with the condition that one fully understands what is meant by living faith.

Just as it is only one with fully sensitive taste buds who will be able to discriminate between the tastes of different fruits, it is only one who is alive in his sense of faith, and also continually revivifies it, who will be able to appreciate the taste of faith in different sets of circumstances. On the contrary one who allows his sense of faith to become blunted, may experience different types of situations, but he will never be able to savour the sacred taste immanent in them. Even if living in the garden of faith, he will never know the divine aroma of faith.

## Man: An Exceptional Creature



A tradition of the Prophet of Islam reported in books of Hadith reads: “God created Adam in His own image.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6227) This does not mean that man is like God in physical appearance. It means that God has in a limited way





granted to man those divine attributes which exist in perfect form in God's being.

In the entire universe a human being is an exceptional creature. His is a living existence. He is the only creature who has been granted a complete personality. He thinks, sees, hears, carries out planned action and can enjoy a multitude of things by using his five senses. All these are exceptional qualities which are granted only to man out of all the creatures in the entire universe.

Man has been given these exceptional gifts so that he may engage himself in an exceptional task. This exceptional task is to discover and apprehend the Creator at a conscious level. In this way, the Almighty Lord of the Universe has given man the opportunity to discover Him at the level of realization. He may see God while He Himself is unseen. He may render himself powerless before God; in spite of having power; he may surrender himself before God without any compulsion.

He is blessed in having been given the ability to convert the entire world of nature into spiritual provision for himself, for he has to develop himself intellectually by awakening his consciousness. When he does so, he finds truth at the level of personal discovery; the realization of God comes to him as he bows in self-prostration. Then he has to develop his personality to such a degree of moral refinement that he may be held deserving of finding a place in the vicinity of Almighty God, that is, Paradise. Those who fail to develop such a personality are worthless in the eyes of God.

## Three Levels of Development



A tradition is recorded in different books of Hadith. In the words of Sahih Muslim, Abu Hurayra narrated that the Prophet of Islam said: “Man is like metal—like silver and gold. One who was better in the days of ignorance (that is, prior to Islam) is also better in Islam, if he can develop a deeper understanding in Islam.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2638 b)

In this tradition, the stages of a person’s intellectual development are explained. The first intellectual level is the one on which human beings are born. The second intellectual level is that which one attains by one’s own efforts. The third level is that of realization of God. By reaching the level of realization, the individual can achieve the final destination of his intellectual development. That is, the level the other name of which is Islam.

In this sense, an individual’s example is like the metal. Iron is mined from the ground in the form of ores i.e., in its original state. After that, it is melted and purified. Then it takes the form of iron. Next, it passes through the industrial process of combining it with carbon to form the alloy steel. After that it can be made into machines, tools, etc. That is, in the first step it is an



ore, in the second step iron and in the third and final step it is steel.

This is the case of the human being. A person's birth is like his coming to the outer world from his natural mine. After that, he grows up, thinks and undergoes the stages of getting an education and training. In this way he reaches the stage of maturity and becomes a complete person. This is the middle phase of human life. After this, if a person uses his reason along right lines, he is able to reach the level of realization of God.

This is the stage when a person who is born into this world may reach the heights of humanity and may attain the state of one who has realized God (*Aarif billah*).

Every individual has an inborn personality bestowed upon him by God. Initially everyone is equal. It is only later, with the development of human potential, that differences arise.

Some achieve a higher level of development than others; the highest level is that of God-realization. There is a tradition which says: "To God, the young believer is better than the old one, and that everyone is good, that is, there is good in everyone. Take those things which are beneficial for you, seek help from God and be humble. And if anything thwarts you, don't say: 'I wish I had done such a thing differently'. Say rather: 'It was according to God's plan.'" (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2664).

If a person himself feels inferior, he should not lose heart because he may possess hitherto unsuspected qualities. An individual should discover his own

potential and live his life accordingly. During any struggle, if he faces problems he should understand that there may also be positive advantages in negative experiences. A person should learn positive lessons from his negative experiences. He should not lose hope in any situation to the point of feeling victimized. He must rather learn to think positively.

In this way, he will continue to develop his personality. By introspection, he can reverse wrong conditioning. By awakening his consciousness, he will develop his personality in such a way that he has the capacity to accept the truth. He must follow this prayer said by the Prophet Muhammad: “O God! Show me the truth as it is and give me the strength to follow it. And Show me falsity as it is, and protect me from it.” (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 1, p. 427) And “O God! Show me things as they are.” (*Tafsir al-Razi*, vol. 1, p. 119)

One who thinks positively may be described as having a developed personality. Wise is one who builds up such a personality. As far as everyday experience is concerned, God gives natural gifts to all of us equally. But, subsequently it is the duty of the human being to turn himself into a developed personality. It is like using machinery to convert the ore found in nature into steel.

The next development is based on this process of self-preparation. The self-taught introspect continuously and analyze their mistakes in order to de-condition themselves. They are the ones who have at all costs converted ore into steel. They are the ones who avoid such things as create obstacles to their personality

development, for example, ego, pride, envy, anger and revenge.

In short, they are the ones who, having analyzed themselves completely, have been able to discover God and accept Him totally and unconditionally. This they have done by the grace of God.

Purification (*tazkiya*) is compulsory for all men and women. This entails their resisting and overcoming the influences of their environment which we describe as conditioning. In consonance with one's feelings and desires people develop certain habits. Consciously or unconsciously under the influence of their interests, they become conditioned in such habits. All these things create obstacles to their leading a spiritual life. To overcome these obstacles, an individual has to become his own guide. He must identify his mistakes, and apply to himself the process of rigorous de-conditioning. This is a prerequisite for purification. Without this, no one can be genuinely purified. No one can get entry into Paradise, without self-purification.

Those who have been successful in engaging in these processes, discover the truth. They have been mentioned in the Quran as "soul at peace" (89:27). They are the ones who fell in line with the creation plan of God and who developed in themselves the desired personality according to His creation plan. These are the ones who will be rewarded by God and will gain entry into Paradise.

## The Veil of Satan



The following is a part of a long tradition: “Satan keeps hovering over the eyes of human beings, so that they may not reflect upon the divine signs scattered all over the earth and the heavens. Had it not been so, they would certainly see divine marvels.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 8625)

The universe around us is called nature in scientific terminology. Man comes across numerous events or phenomena in this vast world of nature. He sees and experiences them without learning any lesson from them. This verse of the Quran applies to the unheeding: “And there are many signs in the heavens and the earth that they pass by and give no heed to.” (12:105)

These events scattered in the universe are in fact divine signs: they serve as an introduction to the Creator in the form of His creation. If a person were to see with open eyes, he would observe the marvels of nature in these signs. But Satan puts such thoughts in man’s mind as prevent him from seeing those events of nature from the right perspective. It is Satan who puts the thought in a person’s mind that all those signs of nature are the result of the laws of cause and effect, happening automatically, rather than the result of divine power. Satan tries to stop man from looking at these events



from the point of view of deriving lessons from them. He strives to make man look at them purely from the point view of material gain. Satan tries to make man take everything around him for granted and not ponder or reflect upon them. It is these Satanic whisperings which deprive man of the right realization of God and reality.

## Humility: A Great Form of Worship



Tradition has it that every person is a sinner and the best one is he who repents for his sins, which is a great form of worship. This relates to God as well as human beings. When you acknowledge your wrongdoing before God, this is called ‘repentance’ or *taubah*, and when in relation to human beings, repentance means admitting that one was wrong. (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2499)

A study of the lives of the Prophet’s Companions reveals that they were truly and frequently repentant. There were many occasions when one of the Companions said that he had made a mistake and asked for forgiveness, even although in the purely legal sense, he had not made any kind of mistake. This was because they felt that they might have erred unintentionally.

Why was this so? It was because saying ‘I was wrong’ is in fact to establish one’s humility. According to

Islamic doctrine or belief, at all times the angels of God are near to every person. They are constantly noting down records of man's words and deeds. In such a situation, it is absolutely natural that a true believer will be extremely serious about the angels recording him as a humble person and not as a rebellious one.

This feeling is natural. It arises consciously or unconsciously, in everyone. Therefore, a believer does not like to appear as an arrogant person in the eyes of the angels. Even in the case where apparently he has not made a mistake, because of his humility, he often utters these words: "I was at fault", (I was in the wrong). By not admitting the mistake, rebellious emotions get the better of one. On the contrary, by admitting mistakes, one demonstrates his humility. Refusal to accept one's wrongdoings shows arrogance, whereas admitting one's mistakes is a sign of the true believer who has surrendered himself before the Lord.

## What is Taqwa?



**I**t is recorded in a tradition that Umar Faruq once asked Ubayy ibn Kaab what taqwa was. He replied, "Have you ever passed by thorny bushes?" He said he had. Ubayy ibn Kaab then asked, "What did you do then?" Umar Faruq said that he had gathered up his clothes and cautiously kept away from the thorns, so as





not to get entangled. Ubayy ibn Kaab replied that that was *taqwa*. (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 1, p. 75)

We learn the reality of *taqwa* from this tradition. *Taqwa* actually means that in this world, one should keep away from all kinds of trials and tribulations. It can be summed up in one phrase, a ‘cautious approach’. At all times in the world there are different types of temptations, and great and small tribulations. In such conditions, the way of *taqwa* is for a person to keep sedulously away from all these and adopt a cautious approach on all occasions.

Two things are very important to be able to adhere to this path—sincerity and introspection. That is, to reflect upon everything very seriously and to introspect at all times. These two practices will act as a guarantee that one will continue to remain on the path of *taqwa* and will steer clear of non-godly paths which will lead to distraction.

*Taqwa* does not mean adopting some outward form of dress. It is mentioned in the tradition that *taqwa* relates to the heart. (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2864-a)

Those who reflect deeply on matters will be able to follow this path of *taqwa*. In reality, *taqwa* is the name of one’s internal state. If a person is not God-conscious internally, no outward form or practice can grant him the status of a person imbued with *taqwa*. According to a hadith, God does not see the outward form, but sees one’s heart, i.e., one’s inner state. (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2864-b)

## Greenery Returned



In Delhi, there is a tree near my house. I call it a spiritual tree. I sit under it for hours on end for it gives me spiritual peace.

Before the rainy season this tree was completely dried up. I thought that it had probably come to the end of its life. It was not going to be green and lush again, but after the rainy season, it started to become green again. Leaves began to appear on its branches and by the end of August, it had become completely green. Its freshness had returned completely.

This story is symbolic for human beings. It is necessary for a person's spiritual life to receive "water". One who lives without "water", will have a personality like a dried up tree.

For human life, divine inspiration is like life-giving water. Through it, one ought to establish an eternal spiritual bond with God. A bond of this kind will give one renewed freshness. If this bond is broken for any reason, he will become like a dried up tree.

Remembrance (*zikr*) of God is the link to God Almighty. What does 'to remember God' mean? It is not just the repetition of certain words. It means to remember Him again and again in different situations. For example if you see a tree, you will see the miracle of



God in it. You will exclaim, standing with your hand on your heart, “O God! The way you have made the tree green and fresh, so also in the same way make me like a green tree. I am just a dried up tree. You can turn me into a green tree by your inspiration.” This experience does not relate to any one thing. It relates to all things. Everything in this world contains spiritual food. Wise is the one who is able to live in this world by taking spiritual food from everything.

## The Price of Expected Acknowledgement



If a person were to be transported to the moon or if he found himself on some planet other than the earth, it would be a very shocking experience for him. He would see that, none of those things exist on the moon or on other planets which are necessary for a human being's survival. Look at the example of the fish out of water which wriggles about on dry land.

On the contrary, when a man takes stock of his life on earth, he finds that all those things are available here in abundance which are necessary for him to survive. For example, light, water, air, food, and the list is endless. Why is it that for human beings all the favourable conditions of life are already present on this earth? And does man understand the price of acknowledgement



expected from him, for what has already been provided on the planet earth for him?

There are so many amazing phenomena in the universe. For instance the stars, the planets, the oceans, the mountains, etc. All these things are the creation of God. They all acknowledge God, but this is compulsory acknowledgement; it is not by choice.

Exceptionally, God has created man as a free creature. Man is required to acknowledge his God by his own choice. He should stand on the planet earth and say: “O God! I believe in Your existence without seeing You, and O God! I surrender myself before You without any compulsion. O God! I admit my helplessness in the face of Your power.” That is the acknowledgement expected from a human being, on the basis of which all blessings have been bestowed in advance. Those who measure up to this acknowledgement will find that these blessings will continue to increase for them, but those who failed to acknowledge these blessings, will be deprived of them forever.

## The Existence of God



Scientific studies of the universe have been regularly undertaken for almost five hundred years. Great minds have been engaged in this study. But how far has this scientific study taken us? This universe is so



vast that it is beyond man's comprehension. According to the latest scientific research, man's knowledge barely encompasses 5% of universal realities. This 5% demonstrates the limitations of human knowledge. As one scientist has put it: "We are knowing more and more about less and less."

Knowing about God is to know about the Creator but experience tells us that so far, man's knowledge of God's creations is still infinitesimal. This being so, if anyone demanded exact information about the Creator, that would be totally an unscientific demand. Man has not yet been able to obtain complete knowledge about creation, how can he have complete knowledge about the Creator?

Creation exists within space and time, whereas the Creator exists beyond space and time. When man is so helpless that he cannot have knowledge of even those things which are within space and time, how can he bring under his observation the reality which exists beyond space and time? The reality is that, a person in this world can discover God only at the level of humility and not at the level of knowledge.

## No Acknowledgement of God



**A**ny normally generous father enjoys gifting things to his children. But let us see from what angle such gifts are regarded. Suppose he gives his son a car and



then writes on the windshield “A Gift from Dad”. This, in fact, is a case of ungratefulness. A blessing which is in actuality given by God, is thus attributed not to God but to a person. This is a case of a failure to acknowledge God’s magnanimity and that is the greatest sin in this world.

The Quran states that, when Prophet Solomon received a blessing he immediately said: *Haza min fazli rabbi* which means, “This is by the grace of my Lord.” (27:40) This is the only correct way to express true faith. That is, the Prophet described an apparently material blessing as “God’s gift”. True believers consider that everything belongs to God alone and acknowledge God by attributing everything to Him.

Whatever people get in this world is apparently by their own efforts. But this only appears to be so. The fact is that every single thing is a blessing from God. It is required of a person that he remove the veils in which reality is shrouded and by discovering the truth may say on receiving every blessing that this is God’s gift given directly to me by God. Gratitude is the religious term for this acknowledgement. Only those who acknowledge God and are grateful to Him have a legitimate right to live in this world. On the contrary, those who fail to do so have no right to live in this world, for they are no better than sinners and intruders.

## Animals in the Garb of Man



**I**n February 2008, I went to an International Book Fair which was held in the Pragati Maidan in New Delhi. There were so many splendid book stalls on each side of the Pragati Maidan. And there was such a large number of people reading and buying books, that it appeared as if the Pragati Maidan had become a city of knowledge.

While I was walking inside the book fair, I noticed the strange sight of a dog, running around between the people. Apparently, it was also moving around like a human being but it did not know that there was a great deal of the world's knowledge in the form of these books. It had no desire to seek some light for itself from this vast world of knowledge.

The presence of this animal in the world of the book fair, reminded me of a verse of the Quran which states that many people appear to be like human beings but are actually like animals. They only eat and drink in this world and then die. (47:12) God says in the Quran: "Whosoever turns away from My reminder, will lead a straitened existence and on the Day of Judgement We shall raise him up blind." (20:124)

God's signs are scattered everywhere in the present world. These signs introduce the Creator in the form



of the creation. Those who discover God in this introduction and shape their lives accordingly, are not blind. But those who do not realize the presence of God are blind. They are like blind people in this world. That is why, in the end, they shall also be raised up in the state of blindness. Such people appear to be human but in reality they are like animals. This reality has remained hidden in this world, but in the end it will be revealed.

## Discovery! Discovery! Discovery!



**T**here is a maxim in Japan that you should discover new things everyday even if it be a method of putting thread in the needle. This saying is about material discoveries.

But this same principle applies equally in the case of realization and spirituality, although on a more elevated level. Spirituality is not something stagnant. It is a continuously growing entity like trees.

The fact is that the human mind is unlimited in its potential. The universe of facts external to the human mind are also boundless.

This being so, one who keeps his mind in a state of continual awareness and reflects deeply upon things with full concentration at every moment, will continue to discover new realities everyday. For him the treasure trove of the discoveries will never come to an end.





Just as material food is sustenance for the body, similarly spiritual discoveries are food for realization. A constant supply of material food is a surety for the body's survival. Similarly, spiritual discoveries give life to God-realization and spirituality, and are a guarantee of human development.

Such discovery is an intellectual process. To continue this process uninterrupted, two conditions are a must—reflection and saving oneself from distractions.

When these two conditions are met, the human being will definitely become a man of discovery. In consequence, nothing will stop him from making new discoveries.

Discovery is the spirit of life. Discovery is the source of intellectual development. Discovery makes a person complete. Without discovery a human being is just like a body without a spirit.

## Patience, Introspection and the Willingness to Learn



After faith, three basic things are required in order to lead a meaningful life. They are patience, introspection and the willingness to learn lessons (*tawassum*). Without adopting these three things no one can become a true believer. After believing, every



believer first of all faces the stage of finding out how to lead his life as a believer in his own environment. According to the law of nature, one finds unfavourable situations at every moment, which makes one intolerant. On all such occasions, a person has to remain patient, so that he may remain on the straight path without any deviation.

The second thing is introspection. In this testing ground, one makes mistakes again and again. It is essential that a person should hold himself accountable for these mistakes by subjecting himself to unbiased introspection. Without instant introspection the tendency to make mistakes will become an ineradicable part of one's personality. The third thing is the learning of lessons (*tawassum*). This means observing the phenomena of the universe in order to learn lessons from them, thus receiving spiritual nourishment from physical events. This is spiritual food for the seeker of truth, without which no one can become an aspirant to spiritual development. Religious life begins from faith. But it is only the starting point of spiritual life; it is not the final destination. After that man has to go through a course uninterruptedly, without completion of which no one can reach the stage of a true believer in the real sense. Basically, the components of this course are only three: patience, introspection and learning lessons. This course cannot be performed by any kind of formal rituals. This is entirely a conscious intellectual journey. Just by awakening one's consciousness, one can achieve success in this test.

## God and Man



There was a dispute about a property between Mr. A and Mr. B. Mr. A said that a certain property belonged to him but that Mr. B had taken possession of it illegally. There were lengthy verbal interchanges between the two, but Mr. B was not ready to admit his mistake. Finally, Mr. A said to Mr. B that if he held God's book in his hand and said that this property was his, he would accept his claim and he could keep the property in his possession. Mr. B replied: "How does God come into the picture?"

In the present age, this is the case with almost everyone. Everyone does as he pleases, and when he is told to fear God, he asks, "How does God come into the picture?" This is sometimes said in words, and sometimes implied by people's action. This is true not just of the common men but also of the highly educated. For example, in present times, when advances have been made in the physical science and the laws of nature have been discovered, the modern educated class generally leave God out of their conception of the universe. They say, when all the events are happening according to the laws of nature, then why it is necessary to bring in God to explain the universe.

God is the Creator and Lord of this world. But it is strange that right throughout history, man has not given the importance to God which was His due. A person's very existence is a bounty conferred by God in the complete sense. Whatever he has in the form of wealth and children have all been bestowed upon him by God. Innumerable things like light, oxygen, food and water never cease to be available for man. The only one to give these things is God. But this greatest reality has been the least recognized in the whole of history. Man had only one thing to give to God and that was to acknowledge Him. But he has failed to do so.

## Increased Faith



**T**he Sun is 93,000,000 miles away from our earth and is 1,30,000 times bigger than it. The sun is not as solid as the earth, but is rather a big blaze of fire. Its temperature is 11,000 degrees Fahrenheit and is so hot that even the hardest of matter would melt on its surface. If the earth were to come closer to it, it would melt in less than one minute.

How does the sun shine and how does it give out such large amounts of heat and light? Since ancient times, until quite recently, it was believed that the sun was continuously burning like a wood or coal furnace. But when astronomical research revealed that it had



been giving out light in this way for thousands of years this theory was proved wrong. Had there been any matter burning up inside the sun, it would have been extinguished long since, because nothing can go on burning for such a long time.

Now, the scientists have advanced the theory that the heat of the sun is the result of a process similar to that which takes place in the atomic bomb. The sun changes matter into energy. This is different from burning. Burning changes matter from one form to another. But when matter is changed into energy, very little matter is needed to produce a tremendous amount of energy. One ounce of matter is capable of producing enough energy to melt more than a million tons of rock.

In this universe, there are innumerable signs which show that a great Creator is at work behind its functioning. Without God Almighty, such a great creation could not have come into existence. The Quran repeatedly exhorts the reader 'to reflect' on the signs of God spread out in the universe. This is a pure form of religious practice. It results in an extraordinary increase of faith in a believer.

## The Spiritual Loss Caused by Greed



**G**reed is a person's greatest weakness: everyone feels that whatever he has is not enough. Everyone



wants more and more. No one is satisfied with what he has. Psychology of this nature is destructive. The greatest loss it inflicts is that one is deprived of the blessings of special prayer to God. If an individual lives in a state of gratitude, that is, if he feels that whatever is required for leading his life in this world has been given to him by God, this will become a great point of reference for prayer.

These words will be uttered from the depths of his heart: “O God, You have given me everything in the world.” (14:34). Now I want the same in the world Hereafter as, You have promised in Your Book: “Therein you shall have all that your souls desire, and therein you shall have all that you ask for.” (41:31)

A prayer said in gratitude is a high form of prayer. Such a prayer comes from one’s heart with deep feelings. Such a prayer is the result of a prepared mind. Such a prayer represents one’s entire existence.

In such prayer the choice of words is secondary. What is of prime importance is the internal feelings which stir up one’s heart and mind. Such a prayer comes out of one’s lips only when one comes so close to God that no distance remains between him and his Creator. In such a prayer words are just symbolic. The real, or actual *dua* is that, which is heard only by the angels who then without delay deliver it to God.

## Rational Knowledge and Inner Realization



There are two levels on which learning takes place. One is that of the acquisition of rational knowledge and the other is that of inner realization. Rational knowledge is only primary knowledge. Superior wisdom lies in the realization of truth at the level of inner insight. For instance, your awareness about your neighbour is based on rational knowledge. But what you know about your mother is at the level of conviction. Without using logic or reason and without the slightest doubt, you know that a certain woman is your mother. This is possible only at the level of total conviction.

This is true also of God, Who is the Creator and the Lord of man. Man's primary discovery about God takes place at the rational level. But such discovery ascends to a higher plane when man realizes without any doubt, through his inner perception, that God exists in the same way that he does. This is the case with the truths pertaining to God, for example, the truth that the Quran is the word of God and the Prophet is God's Messenger. This knowledge is gained through rational thinking. But this is on the primary level of the realization of truth. The higher level of the realization of truth is the firm belief that man's inner perception becomes enough to accept these truths beyond any shadow of a doubt. There are two

levels of knowledge in this matter: rational knowledge and divine knowledge. Rational knowledge is based on data, in comparison to which divine knowledge is that level of truth on which a person himself tries to reach this level of confidence on the basis of inner perception, where he does not need any data. His own inner feelings are the source of his conviction. It is that level of knowledge on which every individual has the conviction that a certain woman is his mother.

## What is Islam?



**T**he literal meaning of Islam is submission, that is, submission to God's will. Submission, in fact, is the name of that natural response from a person to God, the response that is expressed by human beings after their realization of God. It is with this submission that that life has developed which is called a religious life.

What is realization of God? The realization of God is the realization of that Being who has created man, who has granted man with a personality which is unique throughout the vast universe, Who has created the planet earth for man and who has established a unique arrangement for man's survival which is called the life support system.

A person's quest does not stop here but rather becomes a part of his life in the form of a process of discovery. Now, he discovers his relationship with God. He grasps the reality that he is not free but is under





the command of God. In the process, he realizes that he is not free but has to act at God's behest and be accountable to Him. Death is not the end of his life, for another life begins after death, where he will stand before God, so that God may declare His final decision about his eternal future.

This process of discovery continues until he realizes that the end of his life is going to culminate in the form of either eternal Paradise or eternal Hell. This quest makes him extremely serious about the course his life should take. Now he plans his life anew. Now he redefines everything. If at first all his activities were self-oriented, now they are God-oriented. It is this very lifestyle which is called Islam.

## One Serious Fallacy



People use reason extensively in their worldly matters. They think a lot and make thorough plans, but in the matter of religion they take a totally different path. Here, they think: let us go to some saint, ask him to pray for us, go to some dargah, visit some elder or holy man, count out some words on the rosary, or do some rituals; and then they imagine they will have discharged their religious obligations. But this is applying double standards and is wholly insubstantial. One is not going to benefit from any of these courses of action in any way.



The truth is that, just as a person uses his reason in worldly matters so also shall he have to use his reason in matters of religion. He shall have to be entirely logical, without which no one can be a religious person in the real sense or be held deserving of Paradise.

The process of becoming a religious person in the full sense is a conscious act. For every man and woman, it is necessary to discover religion at a conscious level. A person should make his religiosity a conscious matter rather than just ritual obeisance. He should make his religion a fundamental part of his mind and heart. He should make his religious life a life of awareness just as he has made his worldly life a conscious experience. There is absolutely no exception to this rule. The greatest things that God has given a human being are his reason and his awareness. Those who do not find religion at this level and do not adopt religion in this sense will be held to be irreligious in the eyes of God, whether or not they are religious at the ritual level, that is whether or not they perform all the necessary rituals. Religiosity is a conscious act rather than the observance of a set of rituals.

## Towards the Truth



**K**halid ibn al-Walid who was born in Makkah was initially an opponent of the Prophet of Islam and participated in several wars against him. Shortly before the conquest of Makkah (8 A.H), he came to Madinah and accepted Islam. While narrating the story of his



acceptance of Islam, he said that before having accepted Islam, he had been engaged in activities against Islam, but he felt again and again that he was not at the right place, being the Prophet's rival. It weighed on his mind that he was not doing the right thing (*Al-Bidaya wan Nihaya*, vol. 4, p. 272).

This incident tells us of a psychological reality. God has created everyone with a particular nature, the nature desired by the Creator. As such, everyone who is not on the right path of God, at some point or the other, is overwhelmed by this feeling that the path he has taken is not his true path, that he was born for something else. This feeling is a warning given by nature. This feeling gives a person the opportunity to revise his stand and discover the right path for himself. But an individual is not always alerted by this warning and he continues to keep to the wrong path until he dies.

This feeling, in fact, is like a starting point in human life. This starting point gives a person the opportunity to set right the direction of his journey so that he may proceed towards the real destination. But the domination of desires, material interest, social biases and family pressures come in his path and he again goes back to the previous path, even after being warned by nature.

Everyone is engaged in such activities about which one's heart continuously tells him that he was not at the right place. There are many people who lead their lives in this state and die in the same state. Nevertheless, there are some who succeed in emerging from this intellectual morass and take to the right path demanded by their nature.

## Modest Man



**S**elf-centredness or a superiority complex is a natural syndrome which exists in everyone. This feeling brings about courage and confidence in a person. If a person has no ego, he will be deprived of self-confidence and in the absence of self-confidence no one can perform any great task. But it is necessary that one's feelings of self-confidence or superiority complex should be bound by limitations, that is, it should be reined in by the feeling of modesty. In the absence of such pressure, a person will lose his utility and his viability in social life. He will suffer from excessive pride (*ahankar*). And without doubt there is nothing more destructive than excessive pride in this world.

There are two things in this world which make a person modest. One is a scientific bent of mind, the other, is his being God-fearing. A scientific bent of mind results from the realization of knowledge. And a God-fearing mind is the result of the realization of God.

When excessive pride builds up in a person, the reason is that he sees himself in relation to man, and since, there are many people he finds less excellent than himself, the feeling of ego or his own greatness begins to grow. But one who has a scientific bent of mind in the real sense, sees himself or his issues in relation to



knowledge rather than in relation to the person who has knowledge. A person can be limited, but knowledge is unlimited. In relation to the person who has knowledge, one can think of oneself as greater than others but in relation to the vaster world of knowledge, everyone is lesser in stature. This feeling naturally produces modesty in a scientific or learned person.

Similarly one who has fear of God, or *taqwa*, will see his affairs in relation to God, the Almighty. Here too, the same principle applies with greater force. When one sees oneself in relation to creatures, one can rate oneself as being greater than others. But when one sees oneself in relation to God, everyone becomes small, in relation to God. No one is great. In this way the belief of a God-fearing man or woman makes him or her a balanced person.

## The Final Explanation



Everything in this world is in its final state of perfection. The solar system is so complete that no other solar system can be conceived of. Our earth with its innumerable components is the final and perfect model. We cannot think of a better life support system than the one that exists in our world. Similarly, the mountains, the rivers, the trees, the animals and human beings, are all in their final state. Even the grass is perfect. No artist can make a better model of grass.

The same is true of the creation plan. The creation plan is perfect. We cannot think of a better one.

God created a human being in the most superior form, then He placed him temporarily on our present earth and it was destined that in the eternal world after death, everyone would be punished or rewarded according to the deed he had performed in this world. This is the creation plan. For a creature like man, this is undoubtedly the best possible creation plan. No better creation plan can ever be conceived of.

For instance, every person has great desires. These desires are etched in his mind in the form of a beautiful concept of Paradise. Every man and woman wants to find a world where all desires are fulfilled without any obstacles. Every plan of life made by philosophers or thinkers, falls short of the fulfilment of human desires. The creation plan that comes before us in the form of the Hereafter is in its final form and has all the resources for or means of the fulfilment of desires. This aspect of the concept of the Hereafter is the final proof that it is the real concept of life. All other ideologies are mere suppositions.

## The Spirit of Allahu Akbar



The spirit of Islam in one phrase may be called the *Allahu Akbar* spirit. The greatest prayer of Islam is *namaz*, which is performed five times a day. There are, supererogatory (*nafil*) prayers besides the regular prayers.



In all these prayers, obligatory as well as voluntary, the expression *Allahu Akbar* is repeated about three hundred times during the azan (call to prayer) and prayer.

*Allahu Akbar* means God is great. It is implicit in this that 'I am not great'. In this way, everyday all believers refresh their minds repeatedly with the idea that greatness pertains only to God: there is no greatness for them. Congregational prayer is a practical demonstration of this reality. In congregational prayer, all the believers make one person a prayer leader and the rest stand behind him. This is a social form of expression of the *Allahu Akbar* spirit.

The purpose of saying *Allahu Akbar* is to develop the spirit of modesty. When the spirit of modesty develops in a person in the real sense, it does not stop at any point: just as this spirit manifests itself before God during prayer, it manifests itself in like manner in relation to other human beings. The sign of the true believer is that the spirit of *Allahu Akbar*, or the spirit of modesty, becomes a part and parcel of his everyday life.

Those who are imbued with this spirit of *Allahu Akbar* will never display egoism or pride. They will never distance themselves from others on minor provocations. Working under others will appear to them as an act of worship. Their spirit will find happiness in surrender and modesty rather than in making others surrender to them. They will immediately accept their mistakes. They will be totally free from any desire for leadership.

## The Tendency to Complain



**O**n hearing an acquaintance complain about others, I pointed out that complaint is the killer of spirituality. Making complaints is such an evil that you must totally avoid doing so. He asked that how you could avoid complaining when there are so many reasons for complaint everyday in this world. I said this was how he was being put to the test and that in spite of complaints you yourself have to remain complaint-free in this world, in spite of negative experiences, you have to learn to live positively. This is a form of test paper for a person in this world. Everyone has to pass this test. One who passes this test is a successful person, and one who fails in this test has nothing left to hope for in this life. Furthermore this failure is eternal in nature, success is also everlasting.

The making of complaints is no simple matter. Complaints are always accompanied by ungratefulness. A heart full of complaints will have no feelings of gratitude. Furthermore, a complaint is like dirt. Even one speck of dirt defiles all of the water in the tub. In the same way, even a minor complaint deprives one of the feeling of gratefulness. A person ought to be so sensitive in this matter that he should never tolerate the erosion of gratitude. He should keep ignoring complaints, and





keep ignoring those things which would cause him to complain, so that there is no dilution of his gratitude.

There is only one way to keep oneself away from this deadly evil and that is to nip it in the bud. Even if you have a minor complaint, you should reduce it to zero. Likewise, if there is one small thing to be thankful for you should magnify it so that it looks like something very great. This is the only strategy by which you can develop a personality in which there is no particle of ungratefulness. Those who live with the feeling of gratefulness have eternal Paradise in store for them.

## The Greatest News of Today



The news vendor was calling out, “The greatest news of today!” “The greatest news of today!” I thought that the greatest news for the news vendor was that news which was printed on the front page of the newspaper. But the greatest news of today is actually what we see at the universal level.

What is this universal news? This universal news is that the sun which set yesterday has risen again today to give us light and heat, that the supply of oxygen in the air is continuing for us, the rotation of the earth is going on as precisely as it was going on yesterday, springs of fresh water are continuously flowing into the rivers, the air is flowing just as it was flowing yesterday, the earth remains firm and solid, the life support system which was there



yesterday is still giving us succour today, all the usual activities of life are going on in our world, and so on.

In the morning, when you see the sun's rays entering in your room, it is not unusual that you get out of bed and call out aloud—another golden morning! This is true not only for the sunrises, it is rather true for every event of nature, for even those events which appear small are intrinsically as great as other more spectacular events.

Discovering this extraordinary aspect of an ordinary event is, in a sense, the learning of a lesson (15:75) and it is this learning of lessons from the signs of nature that is the biggest source of the realization of God.

Such realization is a living experience. It is another name for continuous discovery. It means finding spiritual food in the material world. There is nothing mysterious about it. Realization of God is the equivalent of intellectual development.

## The Voice of the Universe



A radio set is placed on your table. Apparently, it is not working for there is no sound coming from it. But when you switch it on, all of a sudden you hear sounds or voices, meaningful voices uttering words which are understandable. Afterwards, when you switched off the radio set, all of a sudden all broadcasting ceased.



Now the speaking radio had fallen silent. It was still the same radio set placed on your table but it was not emitting any audible sounds.

The universe is also a huge divine radio set, broadcasting its messages at all times. At every moment, it is relaying voices. Every day and night, morning and evening it is announcing what the nature of this world is; why a human being has been born into this world; wherein one's success and failure lie; whence one has come and whither one will return; what the divine criterion is of the truth and falsehood by which one will be judged after death and according to which his or her eternal future will be decided.

This happens just as we hear the voices of the man-made radio when we switch it on and also keep our ears open. But the voices emanating from the greater radio of the universe can be heard only by those who open their minds and are attentive to it. The universal radio is apparently broadcasting its message in silent language, but those who are serious about wanting to hear it, find this far more audible than other voices. It is scattered throughout the vastness of the heavens, it is as clear as the light of the sun, it is apparent in the waves of the rivers and the oceans, it enters into us in the form of air. In short, right from the plants of the earth to the stars of the heavens, there is nothing which is not engaged in communicating this universal message—the true listener is the one who listens to this universal voice and seeks guidance for his life from it.

## The Example of a Tree



The tree is a divine enterprise. The tree begins with a small seed within which all the potential exists for it to produce a trunk, roots, branches, twigs and leaves. It just has to find a favourable environment in which to start growing. If you sow the seed under a stone, you cannot expect the desired result. But when the seed is sown in soil, it is as if, the soil becomes soft and helps in letting it take root, and all of a sudden, the seed is linked with the entire universe. In a way, it is as if the whole universe had been created for its nurture.

Many factors come together to provide the seed with food. The layers of soil contain minerals and salts which, when dissolved by rainwater, are assimilated by the roots, which in turn supply them to the rest of the plant and then the tree starts growing. Right from the earth to the sun, the entire mechanism of the universe becomes activated to produce the different weather conditions which will bring the heat and cold and rain necessary for the plant to grow into a full grown tree.

This tree so harmoniously becomes a part of the entire universe that it does not clash with anything else in its environment. If it takes water from the ground, it also gives out moisture through its leaves and contributes to the formation of rain clouds. If the tree takes food from the ground, it produces leaves and flowers, then it



lets its leaves and flowers fall on the ground in order to fertilize the soil. If it takes carbon dioxide from the air, it returns to its surroundings another more beneficial element in the form of oxygen. Although separate from the universe, it relates to the entire universe in such a manner that it does not clash with anything else.

The tree, moreover, presents a beautiful picture to the human eye and gives off a lovely fragrance to the passerby. For those who want food it has delicious fruits to offer. It may also be cut down for those who need wood. The tree meets many needs and is guaranteed to fulfil human expectations for all time to come.

Half of the tree is above the ground and half of it is below the ground. The tree, moreover, is so deep-rooted that it needs no support and its roots are so firmly entrenched in the soil that no one can uproot it. It rises so high in its surroundings that it is always able to have sunlight.

The Quran has likened the believer to a tree. This shows what qualities the believer should have. In the believer all those qualities exist at the human level which exist at the material level in the tree. A believer has to consciously do of his own free will what the tree is doing while governed by nature. The believer, of his own free will, has to create a green world which the tree brings about as a matter of compulsion as it has no freedom. A tree has to follow the laws of nature.

The tree is a growing phenomenon and, similarly, a believer too is a growing phenomenon. The believer is a human being who, because of his divine thinking, is able to make the entire universe spiritual food for his realization of God.

God is the Creator and Lord of this world. Man has only one thing to give to God and that is to acknowledge Him, and live a God-oriented life. Such a life is a life of *taqwa*, a cautious life. Man faces various temptations in life. While facing them he should follow the way of *taqwa* by sedulously keeping away from all temptations and adopting a cautious approach.

Two things are very important to live a God-oriented life: sincerity and introspection. That is, to reflect upon everything very seriously and to introspect at all times. These will act as a guarantee of living a God-oriented life, and steering clear of non-godly paths.

God-oriented life, in essence, begins with the discovery of God. When individuals, whether men or women, discover God, it means that they have found the truth. And this truth pervades their whole being. Then one starts living a God-oriented life.



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021) was an Islamic scholar, spiritual leader and peace activist. Having founded *Centre for Peace and Spirituality International*, he was internationally recognized for his contributions to world peace. He authored over 200 books dealing with Islam's spiritual wisdom, the Prophet's non-violent approach, religion's relation with modernity and other contemporary issues. His English translation of the Quran is popular because its language is simple, contemporary and easily understandable.

**CPS** International  
centre for peace & spirituality

[www.cpsglobal.org](http://www.cpsglobal.org)  
[info@cpsglobal.org](mailto:info@cpsglobal.org)

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