

The background of the cover is a photograph of a park in autumn. A large tree with vibrant orange and yellow leaves stands on the left. In the foreground, a dark wooden bench with ornate metal armrests sits on a ground covered in fallen autumn leaves. The overall color palette is warm, dominated by oranges, yellows, and browns.

# Man's Search For Truth

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

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# CONTENTS

Man's Search for Truth	4
Religion and Human Life	6
God and Man	10
Discovering the Truth	15
Purpose of Man's Life?	17
Experiencing Presence of God	The 25
Accountability to God	27
Man's Test	29
Man's Position in the Universe	30
Life: A Journey Towards Paradise	36
Building a Divine Personality	37
Eternal Bliss or Eternal Deprivation	39
Without an Identity Card	40
Salvation	42
Eligibility for Paradise	43
A Bud That will Bloom in Heaven	45
Living in God's Neighbourhood	47

# MAN'S SEARCH FOR TRUTH

Religion remains the only place where the answers to questions about Truth can be discovered.

Almost everyone who has come into this world asks himself: "Who am I?" This question is present in the mind of almost every person, whether consciously or otherwise. Across the globe, for centuries, great minds have been searching for an answer to this fundamental existential question.

The history of human thought is, directly or indirectly, another name for the search for the answer to this question. In some way or another, every person seeks to know the answer to this question and other fundamental questions, such as: What is man? How did man come into being? What is the purpose of human life? What is Truth, and what is falsehood? Where does a man go after death?

Existential questions like these are called 'the search for truth.' Moreover, the search for Truth has been the biggest concern for man for centuries. Among those who sought answers to these questions was a class of people known as the philosophers. However, despite thousands of years of effort, the philosophers could not arrive at any satisfactory answer to these questions. As a result, philosophy became a discipline of only intellectual debates, dissensions, and conflicts.

Likewise, in the field of spirituality, people tried to reflect on these fundamental questions of life. However, they, too, met the same fate as that of philosophers. The primary reason for this was that the spiritualists sought Truth through meditation in 'the world of the heart.' However, they could obtain no success in this regard. The simple reason behind this is that the heart is

just an organ for pumping blood. Therefore, the realization or consciousness of Truth was absent in the heart. If this is the case, how could those searching for Truth find it there?

The same thing happened with science and its votaries. Knowledge of science acquired great importance with the advent of 'modernity.' In the beginning, people believed that science would finally succeed in answering the questions raised in the search for Truth. However, science quickly narrowed down the scope of its investigation. In their research, scientists found that obtaining answers to existential questions of life was as impossible for them as it had proved to be for philosophers. Thus, they set aside these questions and confined themselves only to researching physical or material things. In this way, it became clear that finding the answers to existential questions through science was impossible.

In this regard, the final domain was that of religion. The task of religion is to help man become aware of the Truth and to clarify man's position in the Universe. Religions came precisely to give man the proper guidance on these matters. However, if we look at the present state of religions, we will realize that they fell prey to distortion later. Hence, there is an urgent need to re-study religions. Beliefs must be rediscovered in their original form.

Philosophy, Science, and Heart-Based Spirituality have failed to find the correct answers to existential questions in the search for Truth. After this, religion remains the only place where the answers to questions about Truth can be discovered. In this matter, those who do not believe in religion and those who do are both standing on the same platform. For both, it is necessary to rediscover Truth through Religion. The only difference is that

this would be a discovery for deniers of religion, while it would be a rediscovery for believers.

'Religion,' here, is not used in its conventional meaning, which is a significantly reduced version. The present versions of religion developed in later generations when 'religious' people became victims of degeneration. These days, when a person is 'born into' a particular religious community, he knows only this reduced form of religion. He becomes familiar with this reduced form of religion to a prejudicial extent. To know the original version of religion, people must come out of the veils of their prejudices. Going beyond the degenerated forms of religion, we need to discover the true form and face of religion. It can be called the 'Rediscovery of Religion'. Without this 'rediscovery', understanding religion's true importance and meaning will be impossible.

## RELIGION AND HUMAN LIFE

A human personality consists of a body and a soul. To stay healthy, man requires nourishment for both. Religion is man's spiritual nourishment. It is food for man's soul.

What is Religion? The crux of religion is what is generally called 'Spirituality.' religion is another name for spiritual science. If other scientific disciplines are about external or physical realities, religion is that science that studies the inner man.

A human personality is manifested in two ways—body and soul. For the health and progress of both, man requires continuous nourishment. The nourishment for the body is material stuff: food and drink. If someone were to stay without food and drink for a while, it would affect their physical condition. They would die if they faced hunger and thirst for a long time.

The same is true of the soul. Religion is man's spiritual nourishment. It is food for man's soul. Without authentic religion, man's soul would wither. Religion gives strength to man's inner being. Religion is the basis for man's spiritual life. Religion is not another name for singing hymns and performing some rituals; it represents the Truth. Every person, rich or poor, powerful or weak, needs religion. Through religion, man obtains what can be called the right starting point of life. A man deprived of religion is also deprived of the right starting point in life.

Religion is the answer to the question, 'Who am I?' It informs man of the purpose of creation. Religion gives man the true philosophy of life. It is a guidebook for life. Religion takes man out of the darkness of ignorance and unawareness and into the light of wisdom and awareness.

Religion makes a person a good member of society. It blesses man with a code of conduct to be able to live with others as a good and trustworthy human being. Religion prepares man to become someone who is not a problem for others. Religion makes man a giver, not just a taker.

Religion is a companion of man in his times of difficulty. It bestows man with the art of crisis management. Religion makes man capable of not becoming a victim of crisis but converting crises into occasions for intellectual nourishment.

Religion is a sign of a person's intellectual health. Religion makes man capable of converting a negative experience into a positive result. Religion can help man transform an enemy into his friend.



As opposed to conventional belief, religion is not a set of rituals and dogmas. True religion is not a person being born into a particular family linked to a specific religious tradition. As a result, he becomes connected with some 'religious' groups he identifies with. These are all external things. It is not the reality of religion. The reality of religion is inner realization, and inner realization is far above external things.

True religion instils right thinking in man. It shows man those hidden things the ordinary human eye cannot see. Religion makes man capable of drawing lessons from the past and seeing the future in the present. Religion makes a man a superman. Religion is a means for man's spiritual evolution.

Our world has two aspects—one, the visible world, and the other, the world that cannot be seen. The world is like an iceberg. Only the tip of an iceberg is visible. The physical eye cannot see the more significant part. Religion makes the non-visible dimension of the world a visible thing for a man.

In life, one repeatedly faces occasions when one feels helpless when one begins to fear that one has lost control over things. At such times, religion appears as a hope, a means for salvation. At this time, religion saves man's drowning ship. Religion is a source of certainty and confidence in all sorts of challenges.

Religion is the source of all virtue. Religion gives man the strength to forgive those who get angry with him, rise above greed, overcome jealousy, accept others, relate respectfully with all, save oneself from injustice, always behave well even with enemies, be a giver, and not just a taker. Religion makes man someone who lives for a higher purpose. It creates within man a principled character. It nurtures self-control and self-discipline in a person.

A religious person is a person who is serious about life. A religious person is an honest person. A religious person is constantly engaged in introspection. He has within himself a self-correcting mechanism.

How does religion generate these virtues in a person? Religion is connected with God, the epitome of all virtues. God is the source of all good inspiration.

Religion makes a person God-oriented. Religion engenders God-oriented thinking in a person. It is God-oriented thinking that makes a religious person unconquerable. A religious person acquires a close personal connection and relationship with God.

Here, it is appropriate to relate a story that symbolically expresses how a genuinely religious person possesses an indomitable spirit and how even a fierce storm at sea is not a problem for a genuinely religious person.

It is said that a ship set sail from America for Africa. It was passing through the Atlantic Ocean when a massive storm suddenly occurred. The vessel began tossing about wildly. All the passengers but one were very nervous and began running helter-skelter. The ship was tossing and turning almost to the water level, and it seemed it would soon drown.

In this turmoil, a passenger was rushing about when suddenly he saw a girl sitting calmly in a corner and playing with her doll. The passenger called, "Child, don't you know what is happening?"

"What?" the girl asked.

"Our ship is in the midst of a fierce storm, and very soon, we will drown!" the man shouted.

Still busy playing with her doll, the girl replied calmly, "But this will never happen. You must know that my father is the captain of this ship, and he will not let it sink."

This little girl is the image of a genuinely religious person. A truly spiritual person never falls prey to despair. He retains his senses and balances even during a major crisis. He never loses faith and courage. He always lives in hope. He can always say: "God Almighty is the Captain of my ship, and He will not let it sink."

## GOD AND MAN

Whoever seeks to build his life in the right way should study the Quran and discover the One God, without whom no person can genuinely build his future.

Anthropologists have found that the concept of God is deeply embedded in man's very nature. Every person by birth comes into this world with the concept of God. Consciously or unconsciously, he must spend his entire life with this conception.

Further study reveals that God is a compulsory necessity for man. Man is an explanation-seeking being. He wants to explain himself, his existence, and the environment around him. Moreover, it is a fact that without accepting God, their explanation is simply impossible.

Similarly, because of his limitations, man sometimes feels that he is simply helpless. This feeling can be overcome only by faith in an all-powerful being—that is, God.

Experience tells us that every person lives with unfulfilled desires. It is only God through whom man can hope for complete and lasting satisfaction. Because of his spiritual Nature, man wants

to live with firm conviction. The source of this conviction, too, is none other than God. For his activities, man requires a target to continue his journey towards it confidently. This target, too, he can obtain only through belief in God.

Studies tell us that every person in this world believes in God somehow or the other, even those who seem to be atheists. Many atheists cry out in utter helplessness to God when they face a major crisis. No person is an exception to this.

Now, the question is, when every person believes in God in some way or another, why do they not all get the result one should get if one genuinely believes in God? Even while believing in God, most people's condition is that they are without divine inspiration and lack peace of mind. Even many who claim they trust God are deprived of the blessings of trust in God. People accept God but feel that they do not have communion with God. Despite believing in God, the evidence of the blessings of God is often not visible in people's lives.

This is because many people worship some 'non-god' in the name of God. They may verbally claim that they believe in God but are tied to some 'non-god' or the other, in actual practice. For example, someone has seated some living or dead person in God's place. Someone worships a 'sun god' or a 'moon god.' Someone else worships money and fame. In the name of Humanism, some seek to transfer the seat from God to man. Some people regard the laws of Nature as a substitute for God. Similarly, some people believe in a monistic concept of God, where God is viewed as a vague spirit, not a Being with whom one can be in communion and relationship.

If you tried to call someone on your phone and, by chance, you dialed the wrong number, from the other end, you might

hear a voice that says, "Sorry, this number does not exist." Unfortunately, this is precisely the case with many people today. In the name of God, they are calling out to some or the other non-God, including the things and beings that, in reality, have no existence at all. Their reply is, as it were, "Sorry, this god does not exist."

If we are serious about the issue, we need to discover that way of thinking or ideology where the concept of God is present in its pure form. This is important for every person. In their belief, every person has made some or the other 'deity' as their 'god.' However, he does not obtain the results that follow from believing in the real God. From their experience, every person feels that the problem for them is not lack of belief in God but lack of the results of faith in God. It is an almost universal fact that nearly every person can know through personal experience.

The cause of this difference between belief and the hoped-for results of belief can be just one. That is, in God's name, a person has faith in some non-god. In this situation, naturally, he will not obtain the results of belief in God.

Many scholars have researched this issue and have found the answer to it. One of them was a highly educated Bengali, Dr Nishikant Chattopadhyaya. In 1904, in a lecture in Hyderabad, he spoke about how he found the answer to his questions. He pointed out that although all the religions that had come into the world before the 7th century CE had a concept of God, in later times, their original texts did not remain intact. He said that the concept of God had been changed in all of these religions, as their original text was not preserved.

Islam emerged in the first quarter of the 7th century CE. A unique quality of Islam is that its original text is fully intact and

preserved. Therefore, one who seriously wants to know the right concept of God has no other choice but Islam.

The Quran is the only scripture that has been preserved in its original form. According to the Quran, God is One. He alone is the Creator and the Lord of the Universe. He is the Sustainer of all the worlds. God is a living Being. He sees, and He hears. Therefore, it is possible for man to directly connect with Him at every moment and in every place. With His unlimited powers, God can make up for every limitation of man. God is the Helper of man in both his pre-death and post-death periods. God is the limitless treasure of peace and security for man. Throughout human history, God has guided man through His prophets.

From the very advent of human history on the Earth, God has sent a series of Messengers into the world to inform people about such issues—or, in other words, to tell them about what can be called God’s Creation Plan. God has sent at least one Messenger to every nation, the last of them being the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad bin Abdullah (570-632 CE), through whom the original guidance became preserved. The essential message of all these Messengers was the same. All these Messengers exhorted people to lead a God-oriented life based on awareness of, and the willing self-surrender to, the One God—or, in brief, a life characterized by ethical monotheism. This way of life is the only way to true success in this temporary world and the eternal world that comes after death—the world of the Hereafter.

God is man’s Creator and Sustainer. On account of this, God fully knows man’s reality. God knows our every need. Because of this, God alone is capable of fully understanding man and providing him with all that he needs. It is only such a Being who

can be man's God. Other than Him, no being has the power to fulfil man's needs.

The Quran is a reliable and authentic introduction to this same God. The Quran is the only source for anyone to obtain a reliable introduction to God.

Based on their personal experience, millions of people have testified that they have studied the Quran and obtained an introduction to God that their very Nature was searching for. They have acknowledged that other conceptions of God did not prove to be the answer to their inner quest. However, when they learnt about the concept of God in the Quran, their heart called out that this was the God they were seeking all along and in whom they secured complete fulfilment.

There have been seekers of God among people of every age. Their very nature set them out to search for God. Religions of every age kept providing men with knowledge of God through their search. However, no foolproof system of writing scriptures down and preserving them had been developed in ancient times. As a result, these religious books did not remain preserved in their original form. Finally, in the early 7th century CE, the Quran was revealed. On account of special arrangements, it was made possible to fully preserve the Quran in its original form. Whoever now seeks to build his life in the right way should study the Quran and discover that God without whom no person can genuinely build his future.

## DISCOVERING THE TRUTH

The critical aspect of the creation plan of God is that man has been created with total freedom. Paradise is the reward for those who use their freedom correctly.

Man is a truth-seeking being. I have personally experienced this myself. From childhood, I have desired to search for the Truth somehow or the other. In the year 1942, this desire became particularly intense. At that time, my condition was such that I would go off into the wilderness and, in solitude, would cry out, "O God! When will you come? Till when shall I wait for your arrival?"

Finally, I got the answer to this in a tradition of the Prophet Muhammad. According to this Hadith, God said: "I was a hidden treasure. I wanted to be known. Therefore, I created man." (*Kashf al-Khafa* by al-'Ajluni: 2016) According to this statement, the purpose of man's existence is to attain a realization (*maarifah*) of his Creator. Moreover, as a reward for this realization, he will be rewarded with a place in eternal Paradise in the Hereafter. The period of man's life before his death is the period to acquire this realization, and the post-death phase of his life is the period to live a life of comfort and peace in eternal Paradise if he proves eligible for this.

### How Can We Realize God?

Realization of God is no easy matter. It is a challenging campaign. This is because an element of doubt is present in every single component of this world in the pre-death period of life as we are on a test here. In this world, nothing is bereft of doubt. In the pre-death phase of life, man's task is to draw apart the curtains



of doubt and see the Truth. Despite doubts, he should obtain a state of complete certainty.

A veil of doubt is placed over everything that exists in the world. As soon as a person takes birth in this world, he finds himself in a jungle of conflicting thoughts. Man is confronted with all sorts of philosophies of life that can leave him utterly confused. There are dogmas of religions and other worldviews, and each religion or ideology claims it is true. Each person nurses a storm of emotions and desires inside him, which are a hurdle in acting rationally. Everyone is entangled in family attachments and social bonds. Everyone is guided by self-interest. Everyone is so caught in the web of wealth and relationships that he does not know what to do or what not to do.

Only someone who can develop objective thinking can realize the Truth in such a situation. He should develop the ability to lift and remove the curtains of doubt and see Truth as Truth and falsehood as falsehood. He should see things as they indeed are. Along with this, he should be able to accept willingly what he knows to be true. If he realizes something is right, he should accept it unhesitatingly. Changing the direction of his life, his aim should be to attain self-discovered Truth.

The means to remove the curtain of doubts that man is confronted with is just one: knowing and understanding God's creation plan. This creation plan explains things so that all doubts are removed, and the Truth is made evident, like the sun appearing bright and shining after the dark clouds have moved away.

## PURPOSE OF MAN'S LIFE?

Man is rightly called the 'best of all creations', which means the best and most meaningful 'being' among all the things created. Such a 'meaningful being' cannot have been created without a purpose.

The existence of man is such a unique phenomenon that no other such example can be found throughout the vastness of the cosmos. Man is rightly called the 'best of all creations', which means the best and most meaningful 'being' among all the things created. Such a 'meaningful being' cannot have been created without a purpose.

The reality is that God, the Creator of man, has created him according to a special Plan. To become acquainted with this plan is necessary for every human being to have a thorough understanding of himself. According to God's Creation Plan, man must spend a period of trial in this present, imperfect world and subsequent to this, according to his deeds, he will earn the right to inhabit the perfect and eternal world, another name for which is Paradise.

### What is God's Creation Plan for Humanity?

God created an ideal, eternal world called Paradise that was perfect in all respects. He ordained that this ultimate world be inhabited by impeccable ideal human beings. To achieve this target, God first settled man on Earth giving him complete freedom. The present world is a selection ground for this grand project. Here, it is being observed who makes proper use of his freedom and who misuses it. At the end of human history, those who have abused their freedom will be rejected, and those who

may have exercised their freedom judiciously will be selected by God and settled in Paradise.

### What is Paradise?

Paradise is the name of the ideal world; the desire for which is lodged in the hearts of every man and woman. It is Paradise where the personality of man shall achieve fulfilment in the fullest sense. Paradise is the ultimate answer to the human quest. It is a vast, zero-defect, evil-free universe, complete in itself. Certainty prevails all over the Universe, but the human world is marred by uncertainty. Fear is unheard of in the Universe, but man continually suffers from fear and apprehension. The rest of the Universe is in a state of equilibrium as it receives everything that it needs, while human beings are in a state of imbalance as they are the only creatures in the world to suffer from the painful thought that they have not received what they wanted. Moreover, the rest of the Universe is evil-free, while human beings continually suffer from the problem of evil.

### What is the Problem of Evil?

The most debated question concerning man and God in philosophy has been 'the problem of evil'. That is the issue of why there is so much suffering in the human world. If God is All-Good, why did He make such a world where people are forced to face different types of problems and where there is so much suffering?

This question can be answered by understanding the creation plan of God. As God has given man the freedom to test him, when he misuses his freedom, it creates problems in the world.

All the evils of this human world result from the wrong use of human freedom.

Unpleasantness has been put into this world for man to learn proper lessons from it. The true lesson taught by unpleasant experiences is that man should remember the next world of Paradise where there will not be any suffering. His approach thus becomes: "Let me not suffer in the Hereafter what I have suffered in this world."

### Why Has God Given Man Freedom?

All the things in this world are God's subjects. The stars and satellites rotate in space entirely at their Lord's bidding. Trees, rivers, mountains, and all other such natural phenomena function according to the unchangeable ways God laid down for them in advance. Similarly, the animals follow precisely those instincts instilled in their species as a matter of Divine Will.

Unlike all these creatures in the Universe, man is free in this world. God has not placed any curbs on him. As such, the critical aspect of this creation plan is that man has been created with total freedom. But this freedom is to test man and not encourage him to lead a life of permissiveness. The purpose of freedom is that man should lead a morally good life of his own free will, thus demonstrating that he is of the highest moral character.

One who conducts himself in this manner will be reckoned as God's special servant who, without any apparent compulsion, chose to be a man of principle, who submitted to God's Will despite having the freedom not to do so. This liberty accorded to man allows him to gain credit for being the most superior of all God's creatures.

The decision regarding a person's eternal future will hinge on his use of freedom—whether he used his freedom correctly or misused it. For those who used their freedom correctly, Paradise is their reward. Those who misused their freedom will live in eternal deprivation.

## Is There A Positive Role of Challenges?

In some way or other, all the problems in life are the price of the inappropriate use of freedom. When people misuse their freedom it creates problems for others. On its face, this price seems to be a very high one. However, from God, we have this good news: after death, when the Day of Judgement will come, God will hold one to task only when it was proved that he had misused the freedom he had been given. For whatever other difficulties a person may have faced based on God's creation plan like the problems that he faced due to the misuse of freedom by others or due to the handicaps that he faced, arrangements will be made for their compensation. This will make it clear that whatever difficulties and hardships he had encountered while on Earth were in line with the demand of justice.

A study tells us that a more significant incentive is not ease and comfort for man's progress but challenge and difficulty. One aspect of this freedom is that it produces competition and challenge, without which no progress is possible. Misuse of freedom leads to problems, and problems are, in a sense, a sort of shock treatment because they can become a means for man's inner growth. It is only through challenges that we can progress in life.

People's engagement in different kinds of activities with complete freedom, at times, goes against the interests of others.

It is a challenging situation, causing great suffering to people. This is necessary for testing human beings and selecting them for Paradise. Further, this system is not evil in the absolute sense, for there is also an element of goodness. Suffering and challenges are the most powerful teachers of life. All such unpleasant experiences prove to be a kind of 'shock treatment' for individuals, leading them to undergo a tremendous mental activity called 'brainstorming.' As per psychological studies, brainstorming is the source of intellectual development.

With ease and comfort, often, man's abilities are ruined. In contrast, challenges and problems often motivate people to develop virtues and scale new heights. That is why one can say that it is not ease but effort, not facility but difficulty, which makes men.

This point can be understood with the help of a real example. In the materially affluent societies of the West, a new disease has emerged named 'Affluenza.' This is a disease of the materially rich. In 'rich' families, people become intellectual dwarfs instead of intellectual giants. Their IQ is very low. They are lazy and do not do much work. In contrast to them, people who have grown up with difficulty and challenges often go on to do great things.

### Is It Possible to Achieve the Ideal?

Another thing to understand is that in every period of human history, thinkers and reformers have tried to establish an ideal society or an ideal state. However, despite all their efforts, they could only make a non-ideal society or a non-ideal state. Why was this so?

This fact of history can be adequately understood only when

viewed in light of the Creator's creation plan. God did not make this world for the establishment of an ideal state or society. The limitations of this present world and the presence of different disadvantages are concrete barriers that prevent an ideal state or society from being established here.

### Is Man's Life Governed by Destiny or Free Will?

I am often asked this question: "Is man's life governed by destiny, or does he have freedom of choice?" The fact is that God has provided the infrastructure to man in the form of a life support system and the different situations that present themselves to man. This is the destiny part of the matter. However, man can respond to all these situations as he likes. In this aspect, he is entirely free. That is his free will or his freedom of choice.

Therefore, I say that the matter is 50-50. Destiny plays a 50 per cent role, as man cannot change the infrastructure and situations provided to him. Free will plays the remaining 50 per cent role, as man is entirely free to respond to situations the way he likes.

Freedom has opened doors of two kinds for man, one leading to success and the other to failure. If an individual becomes arrogant and insolent, he has misused his freedom and failed to pass the test.

But if, on the other hand, he remains modest and humble, bowing to his Lord's will on all occasions, he will have made the proper use of this God-given freedom: he will, without any compulsion, have bound himself by divine principles. One who chooses this course will succeed in the test of freedom. God will handsomely reward him as no other creature. Held to be the chosen servant of God, he will remain in an everlasting

state of blissfulness and blessedness in the eternal world of Paradise after death.

### If Man Has a Free Will, How is God All-Powerful?

Another question I am often asked is, "If God cannot control man's action, then how is He All-Powerful"? There is no doubt that God is All-Powerful. However, since He has decided to put man to the test, He has given man freedom of choice to do what he likes. If there was no free will, there would be no test. So, to test man, God has withheld His power when it comes to man and given him the freedom to respond in any way that he wants. God, however, is getting a record of all of man's thoughts, speech, and deeds maintained, and will hold him accountable for them on the Day of Judgment. On that Day all of humanity will see the power of God.

### What is Man's Trial?

This limited world where man finds himself before death has all the necessary ingredients for the 'trial.' It has man as the perfection-seeking creature in a less-than-perfect world where he has been given complete 'freedom.' Man, thus, has a 'choice' to misuse his freedom by creating havoc, killing people, living a life of leisure, or using his freedom wisely by submitting to an unseen God and living a disciplined life, to qualify for Paradise.

Man's trial rests on discovering God, Who is in the Unseen. Before seeing Him, man should voluntarily surrender himself before God. He should be so desirous of Paradise that this world appears meaningless to him. He should adopt divine ethics without any external pressure to do so. He should develop his intellectual and spiritual being to such an extent that he



produces in himself the ability to inhabit the refined world of Paradise. Paradise is a heavenly colony where peace, love, and noble character prevail. Of this world's inhabitants, only those who have succeeded in maintaining a high moral character will find a place in Paradise.

### What is the Secret of Eternal Success?

In light of this creation plan, the root of all human problems is that the unenlightened want to make their Paradise in this world before death, whereas under the natural laws, the situation here on Earth makes this impossible. Therefore, according to God's creation plan, man has to be content in this limited world before death, so as to make himself eligible for Paradise in the eternal world after death.

Therefore, the right and proper thing for a man to do is acknowledge and accept this law of creation, and plan his life accordingly. His sole aim in this world should be to make himself acceptable in the eyes of God so that he may be held eligible for admission into Paradise in the eternal world after death. Successful is one who has realized the eternal world of Paradise in this temporary world, who has discovered in the failures of the present world, the secret to eternal success in the next eternal world.

### God is Selecting Individuals for Paradise

The Creator has given man freedom while managing history so that despite perversion at the collective level, desired individuals continue to be born unhindered. According to God's creation plan, the present world is a selection ground to select the desired individuals out of the whole of human history. Therefore, the

purpose of creation is to select those individuals, from every age and every race, who, despite enjoying complete freedom, commit themselves to the commands of God. If we understand this point, human history becomes meaningful.

## EXPERIENCING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

God can be seen everywhere in His creation. We just need to acquire the eyes to see God in His creation. Then we will be able to feel the presence of God at every moment.

Man's test in this world is to discover and realize God Who is in the unseen. Discovery of God means that man begins to have psychological experiences of the presence of God. Everything has a price. And the price for the discovery of God is to tear down the element of doubt and see the higher reality. Only those who apply themselves with total dedication to discovering God can experience living in the presence of God in this world. This can be made understandable through the following example.

Among the three people who travelled on the spacecraft Apollo-15 to the moon in 1972 was a man called Col. James Irwin. In an interview, he said that setting foot on the moon was an outstanding experience. He felt God's presence on the moon, he said. He was ecstatic, sensing something deep inside his soul. He felt God very close to Him. He could see God's glory with his own eyes, he said. For him, he explained that trip to the moon was not just a scientific expedition. It also blessed him with a spiritual life.

Col. Irwin's experience was by no means an unusual one. The fact is that all that God has made is so utterly amazing that one

is awe-struck on seeing His creation and thinking how great the Creator of all of this must be. The face of God appears every moment in the perfection of His creation. But we have become so used to seeing the world around us, from our infancy onwards, that we do not feel its uniqueness. The air, the water, the trees and the birds, everything that exists in the world—all of these are incredibly astounding. Every one of these creations is a mirror of the Creator. Because we have become so used to them that we do not realize how amazing they are. But when someone suddenly steps on the moon and beholds this creation of God for the first time, he cannot remain without feeling the 'presence of God'. He sees the Creator reflected in the workings of His creation.

We can experience God's presence in the world where we live in the same way as Col. Irwin did when he landed on the moon. But people do not see this world in the same awe-struck way as someone who steps on the moon for the first time sees it. If we begin to see our world in this way, we will experience the 'presence of God' at every moment. We will begin to live as if we are in the neighbourhood of God and that He is present before our eyes at every moment.

If we see a high-quality machine for the first time, we immediately feel the presence of an expert engineer there. In the same way, if we can develop such sight as can see deep into the world and whatever it contains, we will find the 'presence of God' at that very moment. The Creator will appear to us in such a way that we will not be able to separate the Creator from the creation.

The most outstanding achievement for someone in this world is to begin seeing God, to feel the presence of God near him. If he is indeed spiritually alive, he will see God's light in the sun's

brilliant rays. He will discern reflections of God in the verdant trees. He will experience the touch of God in the softness of the breeze. Then, while prostrating and touching his palms and forehead on the ground, he will experience surrendering his entire existence at the feet of His Lord.

God can be seen everywhere in His creation. Therefore, we need to acquire the eyes to see God in His creation. Then we will be able to feel the presence of God at every moment.

## ACCOUNTABILITY TO GOD

Accountability instils the fact in people's minds that their freedom is not absolute and that God will take account of everyone's words and deeds on the Day of Judgement.

It is essential that man should have within his reach, a super formula for life's management. God provides just such a formula—a complete principle for life's management.

Human beings are not like machines, controlled by a mechanical system; nor are they like animals, governed by their instincts. Human beings enjoy freedom. They take decisions about their actions of their own free will. Now the question arises as to how to keep man on the right course, how to make him consistently disciplined in his behaviour. History shows the ineffectiveness of all worldly measures in this connection, whether social pressures, enforcement of the law of the land or the appeals of reformers.

The Truth is that for the attainment of disciplined behaviour, it is essential for one to be convinced of the existence of a Power far Superior to himself, a Being Who is aware of man's activities at every moment.

There can be only One Being of this Nature and that is God. Belief in God functions at two levels at the same time. On the one hand, man finds in God a Guardian Who is aware of all his activities and Who has unlimited power to chastise him. It is not possible for man to escape God's chastisement. Belief in God compels man to steadfastly adopt a proper attitude in all situations, privately as well as publicly. Only then can he save himself from the wrath of God.

Another point is that belief in God is a storehouse of limitless hope. Man can lead his life in this world with the conviction that if he incurs any loss because of treading the path of Truth, or if he suffers from any other adversity, he will be able to endure it. For if he adheres to the path of Truth, God will grant him a reward in the form of eternal Paradise, and there can be no reward greater than this.

The concept of God provides man with an ideology in which loss is turned to gain and in which adversity brings with it good tidings. It is, therefore, submission to God and living a God-oriented life that is the only way of life for both man and the Universe.

Belief in God entails believing in a Being that is bigger than all humans and has ultimate control over every individual. He knows everything, and everyone is answerable to Him. He can punish everyone for their sins; no one is out of His grasp. In this way, belief in God introduces in man a particular aspect of fear, the presence of which is essential for human life.

God knows all things. He knows all the things that people reveal and all they conceal. He knows the condition of every heart. He knows what we think and how we feel. Wherever we may be, we are in God's sight. In no condition are we out of His reach.

## MAN'S TEST

Accountability comes from this concept of God. This belief instils the fact in people's minds that their freedom is not absolute and that God will take account of everyone's words and deeds on the Day of Judgement. God is continuously watching every person. God watches all of us constantly.

It is this understanding that makes a person God-fearing. When an aggregate of such people come together, they form a righteous society. Conversely, a society without accountability to God will fall prey to total anarchy.

Belief in God is necessary for the proper conduct of human life. Man repeatedly falls prey to temptations that cause him to give in to injustice and oppression. Only a living belief in God's omniscience can be a firm check on that tendency. It is only belief in God that can genuinely discipline him.

Belief in God gives man certainty. It disciplines his life. It gives him the confidence and assurance that if he abstains from evil in his daily life and follows the path of virtue, he will simultaneously obtain benefits. First, he will be saved from God's chastisement. Second, he will earn an eternal reward for righteous living in eternal Paradise from God.

The belief in accountability to God acts as a powerful incentive for the perfection of humanity. This belief puts human life on the path of Truth so that it will never stop until the journey ends.

## MAN'S TEST

Man is a masterpiece of divine creation. Therefore, the proper attitude for man is to remain subservient to God and build his life according to His Creation Plan.

Man is God's servant. God has created man with a plan, that is, to place him temporarily on Earth to test him. Then those who

pass this test will be rewarded with eternal Paradise, while those who fail will be rejected outright.

For this test, man has been granted freedom in this world. Whatever man receives in this world is not a matter of right but only a matter of trial. Every situation here is a test; man must perform adequately in all conditions, as God requires.

The proper attitude for man is not to take to the path of his desires but to try to understand the divine plan of creation, and then after being convinced of its ineluctability, build his life accordingly.

Man may deviate from the divine plan by misusing the freedom given to him by God, but he cannot save himself from the consequences of this deviation.

In such a state of affairs, it is in man's interest that he remains highly cautious in determining the course of his life. Instead of being guided by his will and desires, he should make God's will his guide. Instead of pursuing his desires, he should lead a life in conformance with God's commands.

## MAN'S POSITION IN THE UNIVERSE

The principle underlying the proper relationship between God and man is this: Man's freedom ends where God's domain begins.

Social reformers and thinkers have concerned themselves with the relationship between one man and another. This relation is this: Every man is free as long as his freedom does not impinge on or interfere with the freedom of others. This concept can be conveyed through the following story:

“It is said that when America won political independence from

Britain, a man came out of his house, wanting to celebrate his 'freedom'. So he went out into the streets, waving his hands in glee. Then, suddenly, his hand hit another man's nose. The second man got angry and said, 'What foolishness is this? Why did you hit my nose?' The first man replied, 'Today, America is free, and now I can do anything I like' The second man retorted, 'Brother, America may be free now, but your freedom ends where my nose begins.'"

This story clarifies the moral principle regulating the relationship between one person and another. However, as far as the issue of the relationship between man and God is concerned, man has not been able to discover it properly through his efforts.

This is no complex matter. The principle of the proper relationship between one man and another tells us something about the appropriate relationship between man and God. In light of the principle mentioned above, it can be said that the principle underlying the proper relationship between God and man is this: "Man's freedom ends at the point where God's domain begins."

In this world, all the things man has received are God's gifts. All items are obtained by man only because they have been given to him by God. The same is true of freedom as well. In this world, man's freedom is a blessing or gift from God. It is known that a gift brings a corresponding responsibility with it. In line with this general principle, man's freedom is tied to a necessary obligation, which is that man should use his freedom responsibly and correctly. He should not misuse it.

The improper use of this freedom is to believe that this freedom is man's right, that he is the master of this freedom. He begins to



think, "I will use this freedom as I please, following my desires. I do not have to ask anyone how I should use my freedom."

Contrary to this, the right way to use this freedom is for man to try to discover from whom he has obtained this freedom. And then, man should find out what the Giver of this freedom intends by giving it to him and how he should use this freedom and act accordingly. This discovery makes man aware of the proper use of the freedom he enjoys.

The right and wrong use of human freedom is not a mystery. Any person, if he is sincere, can discover this fact. But, to discover any truth, the seriousness of purpose is necessary. Therefore, seriousness is also required to find out this law of freedom.

The person who reflects on this question with seriousness will discover a criterion inside every person for distinguishing between the right and wrong present in him by birth. With his natural awareness, every person can know which action is right and which is not. This criterion is called 'the conscience.' Another name for it is 'common sense.'

In this way, man can learn what to do and what not to do by listening to the voice of his conscience. It is as if every person's conscience is his guide for him. Inside every person, this warner is present. Experience tells us that this element is never inactive. It never allows man to be heedless. It never makes a mistake in carrying out its duties.

By birth itself, within every person, a specific, powerful emotion is present. It is the emotion of acknowledgement. Everyone can personally experience this. Through his conscience or common sense, every person knows that he ought to acknowledge people's kindness. Man's internal guide recognizes this acknowledgement

as a lofty ethical virtue. Acknowledgement is a high level of righteousness, while a lack of acknowledgement indicates insincerity. In this sense, a person who acknowledges others maintains his status as a human, while someone who does not falls from that status.

In the same way, the decision of the conscience or common sense is also accurate about the Creator. In line with Nature's voice, every person should acknowledge his Creator. He should acknowledge the manifold blessings of his Creator—all that he owes to Him. He should consciously recognize and be grateful for all that His Creator has given him. He should feel this in his heart and openly announce it through his tongue. Acknowledging God is in accordance with human Nature, while non-acknowledgement deviates from it.

In the same way, every person experiences that his conscience is a moral criterion that, at every opportunity, is bearing witness. When a person lies, his conscience scolds him. On the contrary, if he speaks the Truth, it becomes a means for him to feel at ease. The conscience knows injustice to be always evil and justice to be always good. The conscience expresses its displeasure with dishonesty and its satisfaction with honesty. The conscience knows violence to be inhumane and peace to be good. The conscience knows hate to be wrong and love to be a blessing. The conscience rebuts anger and hails forgiveness.

In the same way, when man surveys the world around him, he finds that besides him, all creatures are firmly bound by the law of their Creator. From the seas and the lands to the vast skies, all creatures are, in perfect discipline, doing just what they have been made to do by the Creator. No creature, big or small, deviates even a fraction of an inch from this discipline. From the

minerals, the plants, and the animals of the Earth to the stars and planets in space, all things are bound by this universal discipline.

The Creator has established this discipline in the Universe. Moreover, this discipline is desirable for men, too. Therefore, like the rest of the Universe, man should become part of this universal discipline. However, there is one big difference—the rest of the things in the Universe are compulsorily bound by this universal discipline, while man should voluntarily choose to abide by it in spite of having freedom of choice.

For example, all the planets in the solar system revolve around the sun. In the same way, man should accept God as his focus or centre and establish his life around Him. Nothing in this world is stagnant. Here, everything is in constant motion. The Universe is like a vast factory, constantly moving, but we see no sound, smoke, or pollution here. In the same way, man's actions should be such that they do not cause any pollution—moral corruption, strife, hate, and the like.

Likewise, in the Universe, everything is established to benefit others. Everything is engaged in beneficial action, from the shining sun to the flowing rivers, from the lush green trees to the cool breeze, from the mountains to the seas, from radiant flowers to busy insects. Every component of this vast Universe is a unilateral giver. In the same way, man should plan his life in this world in such a manner that he becomes beneficial to others. Every person should be of benefit to other people and other creatures of God.

In the same way, the study tells us that man always thinks of a particular result and then plans the course of action to seek to obtain this result. Man's thinking is result-oriented. He wants to engage only in that action that produces his desired result. Man's Nature is such that he is reluctant to engage in any activity that does not create the desired result. Human Nature demands that man plan the course of his life in the broader sense under this principle. In the same way, as in the pre-death phase of his life, man plans his actions based on the results he seeks; in the post-death period, too, he should make the result the criterion. He should organize his activities in the pre-death phase of his life in a way that will benefit him in the post-death phase of his life.

The system of this world is divided into 'today' and 'tomorrow,' the present and the future. Other than man, all the creatures in this world act in the present. They have no concept of life other than 'today' or the present. The word 'tomorrow' is found only in the dictionary of man.

This difference is a sort of message to us from Nature. In this difference, Nature is exhorting man not to focus on (or remain concerned only with) his 'today' but to keep his 'tomorrow' in front of him and accordingly plan his life. The success of other creatures lies in obtaining only what they need 'today.' However, man's success is that he should be successful not just today (that is, in the life before death) but also tomorrow (that is, in the life after death). Man's success lies in obtaining the best place in the eternal world after death: eternal Paradise.

## LIFE: A JOURNEY TOWARDS PARADISE

This life is a journey to Paradise, not Paradise itself. We should make ourselves deserving of Paradise by developing a divine personality within ourselves in this world.

For seekers of Truth, a reason-based understanding of the creation plan of God is essential. God, according to His will, created a perfect world called Paradise. A world as per all of our desires as human beings in that it is free of all limitations and disadvantages, free of fear and pain, and free of all imperfections. An eternal world where there is no death or old age. An ideal world where we can achieve complete fulfilment.

As a less-than-perfect being cannot inhabit a perfect Paradise, God has created a perfection-seeking being—man. God intended that man must spend a period of trial in this present and imperfect world, and after this, according to man's deeds, he can earn the right to inhabit the perfect and eternal world of Paradise or live in eternal deprivation.

As part of this test, Paradise is hidden from us. This world, therefore, has all the components necessary for a test. It has perfection-seeking beings in a less-than-perfect world, beings who are free to choose their actions. We, thus, have a choice—we can misuse our freedom to do evil, or we can use our freedom wisely, submit to God, and qualify for Paradise.

The test of man rests on his discovery of God, Who is in the unseen. Before we can see God, we should voluntarily surrender ourselves to Him. Man's desire for Paradise should make him willingly adopt divine ethics. He should develop his personality intellectually and spiritually to be eligible to inhabit Paradise's refined world. Only those who maintain a high moral character

will find a place in a world of peace, love, and goodwill in Paradise.

In this world, everyone suffers from frustration and failure. It is because everyone wants a perfect life in this world itself, which is impossible. After all, this limited and ephemeral world was not created for that purpose. Despite all our efforts, we will fail to make a perfect life in this world of tests. The present world is not Paradise; it only introduces the concept of Paradise to us. We can see only glimpses of perfection in this world. This should increase our desire for complete perfection, which we can only find in eternal Paradise.

This life is a journey to Paradise, not Paradise itself. Therefore, we should devote our lives to preparing ourselves for Paradise in the next life. During this limited life on Earth, what we need to do, first and foremost, is to seek out the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe and submit to Him voluntarily. Having seen a glimpse of Paradise on this earth, we should seek it at the core of our being. Intellectually, spiritually, and morally, we should make ourselves deserving of Paradise by developing a divine personality within ourselves.

## BUILDING A DIVINE PERSONALITY

Spirituality means building a divine personality in this world so one can be truly successful in the world by obtaining a place in Paradise in the period of life after death.

This world is where an individual engages in actions, and the Hereafter is the place where he will receive the fruits of his actions. A concise and initial portion of a person's life is spent in this world. Then, he is taken to the next world, where, according

to his actions, he will get a place either in Paradise or live in eternal deprivation.

In this scheme of things, the present world is a place for the test. An examination hall is always for tests, not for enjoying the results. A student who seeks to build an ideal world for himself in the examination hall will fail to do so. The person who wants to make an eternal palace of joy in this world will not obtain his goal—because the present world has not been made for this purpose.

Wise is he who understands this difference and performs righteous actions in this world, hoping for God's blessings in the Hereafter.

In this matter, an intelligent person adopts the same principle as a student. When a student sits in an examination hall, he focuses all his attention on answering his test paper correctly. He does not attempt to build the palace of his dreams there.

An understanding of God's creation plan should govern man's relation to this world and the Hereafter. According to this, man has to spend a brief period of life before death preparing for the Hereafter in order to obtain a world of eternal joy in the period of life after death. One who discovers God and builds a divine personality while living in this world of tests will find himself in eternal Paradise. When a heedless person enters the next world, he will find that his heedlessness cannot be compensated for. He will face eternal deprivation as he will not be able to return to the present world and be given a chance to take the test again.

We should prepare ourselves for the world that will come after death. We should build a divine personality within ourselves so we find a place in Paradise in the period of life after death. This is true success.

## ETERNAL BLISS OR ETERNAL DEPRIVATION

Death means eternal bliss for some and eternal deprivation for others. Fortunate are those who find themselves on the threshold of Heaven at the time of death; they will dwell in everlasting bliss.

The greatest calamity afflicting our world is that more than one hundred thousand people die every day. No one knows of those who are alive today who will be dead tomorrow. Every one of us shall taste death, but no one knows when death will come. We do not know which of our fellow men will leave this world tomorrow and who will remain to receive this message.

Every man born in this world has to enter another world after death. In this world, man has been granted all the opportunities as a matter of test. Whatever man receives in the next world will be purely based on his deeds in this world. This means that before death, man has been given many things and opportunities, whether or not he deserves them. After death, one will receive in the Hereafter only what he earned on the basis of his performance in this life.

Death is not the end of our lives; it is the beginning of our real life. After death, man will be brought before the Lord for final judgment. The angel who is to announce the Last Day is ready and waiting with the trumpet in his hand for God to give the order to sound it. This will be a most terrifying time for a man. He will want to speak but will be struck dumb. He will want to walk, but his legs will not carry him. All disparity between men will disappear on the Day of Judgement. Fear of God will



seal everybody's tongue. Injustice will benefit no one; Truth will be inescapable. Man will stand alone and be answerable for his actions.

Man has many concerns in this world, but after death, he will be concerned with one thing alone: saving himself from being deprived of God's blessings. If one has ample time at one's disposal, one engages in many tasks. But if time is short, then one concentrates on the most important task.

No time is fixed for death. It can come at any moment. This fact makes death an even more delicate issue. Everyone is on the move, and everyone's journey ends in death. Death means eternal bliss for some and eternal deprivation for others. Fortunate are those who find themselves on the threshold of Heaven at the time of death; they will dwell in everlasting bliss; they will know neither grief nor apprehension.

## WITHOUT AN IDENTITY CARD

On the Day of Judgment, rewards will be distributed to those who made themselves eligible for such a reward before the arrival of that day.

Once, a boy from a village came to the city. Walking down a street, he passed by a school building. It so happened that the school was celebrating a function that day. The schoolboys had formed a queue outside a window. The village boy went closer to see what the matter was. He noticed that the students were being given sweets. And so, he also joined the queue. As the line moved ahead, he advanced, too, dreaming of the sweets that he thought he would soon be eating, like the other boys.

Soon, the boy reached the head of the queue. With great joy, he stretched his hand towards the window. Just then, he heard a voice from behind the window say, 'Your identity card?' The boy had no such card. And so, he was asked to go away. It then struck him that the sweets were being given to only those boys who had spent a whole year as students in the school and not to just any passerby.

Something like this is going to happen in the Hereafter. The Day of Judgment will be the day of Divine decision. On that day, everyone will be gathered together. Rewards will be distributed, but those who receive them will be the ones who made themselves eligible for such a reward before the arrival of that day. These are the people who will appear there with their 'identity card.'

That day is bound to come when one can see the most beautiful scene one can ever witness of the Lord when a head can experience the greatest honour of prostrating before the Lord. But all this will be only for those who, before the advent of that day, had proved themselves eligible for the Lord's favour. If they fail to prove themselves eligible for this in the present world, they will not be able to see God in the Hereafter. On that day, when others are rewarded, they will experience eternal deprivation.

How fortunate will be those who are included among God's faithful servants, for they will be honoured in Heaven on that Day. How unfortunate will be those whom God rejects, for they will have nothing to look forward to except eternal torment and disgrace?

# SALVATION

Salvation in Paradise is for those who, despite having done every kind of good deed, attach no value to it and realize they will gain entry into Paradise only when God's mercy envelopes them.

What is the most outstanding issue facing man in this world? It is how to secure salvation in the life after death so that he may find his true abode and share in God's eternal blessings.

God has created this world as a place of trial for man. Salvation is for those who prove themselves eligible to settle in the ideal world of Paradise in the Hereafter. God seeks those who manage to see God despite Him being invisible, who obey God and devote their lives to Him, who tremble on remembering death, and who realize that the present world is the place for action while the next world is the place for reaping the reward for one's deeds. Those who display such character will be welcomed in Paradise in the Hereafter.

God's blessings will be given to those who earned it and who prepared themselves in this world so they may be held deserving of Paradise. But those who have done nothing to earn God's blessings will not have anything in store for them in the Hereafter. They will be compelled to live in a state of utter deprivation. To ensure that one is not deprived of God's blessings, one must work hard for one's life in the next world while living in this world itself. Salvation would elude the one who fails in this matter.

The next world is the perfect and eternal world where all kinds of pleasure and happiness are in store for man. A man should earnestly aspire for this. But the time for action to secure a place in that blessed world is not the world after death but the world

## ELIGIBILITY FOR PARADISE

before death. Salvation in the life Hereafter is only for those who prove themselves deserving.

We should understand that Paradise will not be given to anyone purely based on the quantum of his good deeds. It will be provided, instead, by the mercy of God Almighty. The preferred ones are those unique people who, despite having done every kind of good deed, have attached no value to their actions. They realize that they will gain entry into Paradise only when God's mercy envelopes them.

## ELIGIBILITY FOR PARADISE

Entry into Paradise is neither based on any recommendation nor a connection to any revered personality. Instead, admission into Paradise in the Hereafter is only for a person who, in the present world, becomes and lives like a paradisiacal person.

Paradise is a blessing without limits. One will find it only by paying a high price for it. Very few fortunate people will be declared eligible to be settled in the world of Paradise.

The first test for admission into Paradise is that man attains the discovery of His Creator at the level of *maarifah*—the high realization of God. He should discover the Truth amidst a jungle of thoughts, views, beliefs, and ideologies. He should develop the insight to see those not visible to the physical eye. He should feel those things that cannot be felt at the physical level. Passing by the tumult of the external world, he should become a traveler of the inner world.

Likewise, a condition for admission to Paradise is that man bows down before God while retaining the freedom to disobey.

Ignoring all incentives to become self-centred, he becomes God-centered in the complete sense. He becomes genuinely devoted to God and God alone. Turning his face from innumerable centres of glitter and attraction, he devotes his full attention to God.

Admission to Paradise will be possible only for the person who, amid adverse conditions, always remains established in positive thinking. This person overcomes jealousy, pride, revenge, and other negative feelings. He unilaterally becomes the epitome of compassion and seeks the well-being of others. Even though he can resort to oppression and injustice, he never does so. In every condition and circumstance, he makes himself bound by justice.

Paradise is a beautiful, divine colony. Therefore, only those souls who had subjected themselves to the process of purification in the present world will be admitted.

The present world is a world of tests. Here, every person becomes polluted in some way or the other. So now, every person should engage in a continuous process of self-purification until his polluted personality is transformed into a purified personality.

Paradise is for those who have purified themselves. Purification means that man should abandon a life of heedlessness and adopt a life of awareness. He should be strong enough to overcome desires which come in the way of achieving this goal. He should save himself from the things that can deviate him from the Truth. If a matter of expediency comes before him, he should ignore it. If pride or resentment arise, he should bury them inside himself.

A person of Paradise lives as a flower amidst thorns, who can become a tower of light amidst the darkness, who can obtain the secret of peace amidst earthquakes and storms, who gives

## A BUD THAT WILL BLOOM IN HEAVEN

proof of love amidst hatred, who, despite people's oppression, unilaterally forgives them, who experiences gain even in loss.

A person of Paradise is he who has become close to God, who sees the light of God in the rays of the sun, who experiences the divine touch in the gushing of the wind, who obtains an introduction to God's greatness in the heights of the mountains, who witnesses God's mercy in the flow of the rivers, who in the mirror of creation begins to see the glowing radiance of the Creator.

God has, through His prophets, explained the attributes of a person fit for Paradise. Therefore, while living in this world, a person who produces in himself paradisiacal attributes will, after death, be declared eligible for entry into Paradise.

Entry into Paradise will happen neither on any recommendation nor is it based on a connection to any revered personality. Neither will it happen based on any mysterious spiritual solutions. Instead, admission into Paradise is entirely based on a known reality—and that is, that the person who in the present world becomes and lives like a paradisiacal person will find admission in Paradise in the Hereafter.

## A BUD THAT WILL BLOOM IN HEAVEN

If you willingly surrender before the Truth and respond positively in the face of trials and tribulations, you will prove that you deserve Paradise.

Quran says: 'He will admit them into the Garden He has already made known to them.' (47:6)

Elsewhere, the Quran says about the people of Paradise: "Whenever they are given fruit to eat, they will say, 'This is what

we were provided with before,' because they were given similar things." (2:25)

From the above, we learn that entry into heaven begins in this very world itself. A heavenly person obtains his heaven in this world itself. It is as if a replica of Heaven exists in this world and that only he will enter Heaven in the Hereafter who had attained this replica of Heaven while living in this world. This worldly replica of heaven is, as it were, a cash award granted to someone before the real reward, as a preliminary indication or symbol of the heavenly reward after death.

Who are these heavenly people? They are those who experience the psychological states that make them eligible for heaven in the Hereafter. In the words of the Quran, "True believers are those whose hearts tremble with awe at the mention of God, and whose faith grows stronger as they listen to His revelations." (8:2)

People of Paradise are those who are acutely aware of being accountable to God. Expelling all feelings of envy, malice and revenge from their hearts, they experience divine forgiveness. In their tears of repentance, they have seen the mercy of a beneficent Master who forgives His servants for their mistakes. They forgive others so their Lord will forgive them. They willingly surrender themselves before the Truth.

People of Paradise are like flowers of the garden of heaven. In this world, they are, as it were, buds that will bloom in heaven in the world to come. Everyone's Heaven and Hell are hidden in the different types of conditions one faces in life. In the face of such situations, if you react negatively, you prove yourself eligible for eternal deprivation. If you respond positively, you establish yourself as qualified for Heaven.

## LIVING IN GOD'S NEIGHBOURHOOD

The people selected to live in God's neighbourhood—Paradise—are the ones who have realized God while He is in the unseen, who adhere to the social and moral ethics set by God and are giver members of society.

Paradise is another name for eternal life in the neighbourhood of God (*Quran*, 66:11). Paradise is the eternal ideal world, which is the ultimate objective of every human being. Paradise is called the 'Home of Peace' (*Quran*, 10: 25). We learn from the *Quran* that the people of Paradise will wish peace for one another, which indicates the importance of peace in the ideal society. In the world before death, those who live in the neighbourhood of God at the psychological level will, in the world Hereafter, live in the eternal neighbourhood of God—Paradise—in reality.

The good fortune of finding a place in God's neighbourhood in the eternal life of the Hereafter will be based totally on merit. God's neighbourhood is like a universal garden. Only those will find a place in this universal garden that measures up to the divine criterion. Anything short of this will not guarantee a place in this universal garden.

Who will be eligible for entry into God's Paradise? God will allow only those people who adhere to divine ethics to live in His neighbourhood at two levels: one stands in relation to man versus man, and another stands in regard to man versus God. These two codes of ethics are different in their dimensions. In relation to other human beings, one must follow social ethics like love, respect, well-wishing, and peace. Adherence to such social ethics makes one a giver member of society.

But no one can be held deserving of entry into Paradise just by adhering to social ethics. To be deserving of entry into



the neighbourhood of God, man has to live up to the divine code related to God. This begins with the realization of God. When an individual discovers his Creator, this transforms his mind. His divine Nature is awakened, and, as a result, all those qualities have been produced that measure up to the standard of elevated human ethics.

Everything has a price, and the price of Paradise is the realization of God. Nothing less than that can open the gates of Paradise. The Truth is that if anything less than the realization of God is regarded as the price of Paradise, that would constitute the belittling of Paradise. Those selected for Paradise are the ones who have made God their foremost concern in the life of this world. Their thinking and feelings have all been devoted to God. Their mornings and evenings have been filled with the remembrance of God. These are the fortunate souls who will be selected to live in the neighbourhood of God for all eternity.

God's angels will welcome those men and women who reach the Hereafter with all the above qualities. The angels would come forward, congratulating him and saying that he was a blessed soul who could enter God's Heaven by divine decree, where there was no death and no parting from a joyful existence, and that eternal life had been granted to him for all eternity. The Quran affirms this promise: "O Soul at peace! Come to your Lord well pleased, and He will be well pleased with you. So enter among My chosen servants. And enter My Garden." (89:27-30)

God created a perfect world called Paradise—an eternal realm meant for complete fulfilment. As only a perfect being can inhabit ideal Paradise, God created human beings with a natural desire for perfection and placed them in this present, imperfect world to test them. Here, individuals have the opportunity to earn the right to dwell in Paradise or face eternal deprivation. Those who discover God in the unseen, voluntarily surrender to Him and adopt divine ethics will earn their place in the refined world of Paradise.

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