

MAN AND GOD

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

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Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

Goodword

First published 2020

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Printed in India

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Foreword



This book aims to develop in the reader the sight that can perceive the Creator in His creation. In the flowing rivers, beaming sunlight, verdant trees and gentle breeze, one can discover the subtle attributes of the Creator who fashioned it all and endowed everything with special properties. We need to learn to listen to the silent voice conveyed by the universe through which we can connect with the Creator and fulfil our innate desire to search for the Being who created us. The various articles of the book explain how a person who sincerely seeks God will find evidence of His wonders in seemingly unusual phenomena of nature. Such a person will attach no importance to the material world and his thirsty soul will find solace in the experience of ‘presence of God’ in the cosmos spread around him.

The reader’s attention is then drawn toward the human world and the contrast that it bears with God’s world. If on the one hand there is perfection, harmony and beauty par excellence, on the other hand there is disagreement, dissension, and all kinds of injustice. This contradiction often causes people to question God’s very existence, some purporting that God is mute. The book quells these doubts by expounding on the creation plan of God.

The reality of pre-death and post-death is stressed for those in quest for leading life meaningfully. This reminds a person to rise beyond ‘today’ and to think of ‘tomorrow’. Being engaged in actions that solely add to our material welfare will

only be wasting this opportunity of life. Our actions should be spiritual experiences for us, providing our inner being with spiritual nourishment. Such elevation of character and purification of the soul will matter in the life after death, and not one's material acquisitions and external accomplishments.

Wahiduddin Khan

June 18, 2020
New Delhi

Living Proof of God



The universe is the mirror of God's attributes. Here, God's attributes are reflected through His innumerable creatures. The existence of the created realm provides ample evidence of the existence, power and greatness of the Creator who brought this realm into being. If your sensitivity is alive, you can find God all around you. You can see God everywhere. God's universe will then become for you living proof of God.

The various forms and activities of living beings are a clear announcement that the Creator of this universe is a living, and not a lifeless, Being. When the sun appears in the morning and things that have been covered by the darkness of night become visible once again, it seems as if God has opened His eyes, that God sees the whole cosmos through His eyes. When a river rushes ahead, tumbling down from the mountains, it loudly declares that the Creator of this universe is a living, active Being. When a tiger pounces on and grabs its prey and brings it under its control, it announces, as it were, that its Creator is a Being who has everything under His control. The astounding expansiveness of space tells us that the Creator is an Unlimited Being.

Witnessing the existence and glory of God in His universe enkindles in an individual faith in Him. At the same time, it makes him face questions of enormous, existential import. If God is, then why does He not directly reveal Himself in this universe? Why do evil and suffering exist? Evil is rampant in this world. Oppression is rife. People are always at each other's

throats. All of this happens day in and day out in God's world. So, why doesn't God stop the oppressors or stand up for the oppressed?

The answers to these questions can be understood only when you understand God's creation plan, the scheme that the Creator has devised for His creatures. This world is a temporary one. Life here is short-lived. We are here in this world in order to be tested. This world is a field, as it were, where different plants have been given the chance to grow in order to see which of these will turn into fine trees, and which into weeds. After this, the fine trees will be provided many fine opportunities to flourish, while the weeds and thorny bushes will be uprooted.

This Is Not a Museum of the Mute!



A train journey can be full of myriad experiences. The train rushes ahead, carrying with it scores of people heading to different destinations. It passes through the countryside, through changing terrain. The train thus becomes a symbol of the journey of life, a life full of signs and indications. But just as the passengers in the train are unaware of the passing scenes outside, being engrossed in activities that delight them, so, too, in this world, an individual passes his time, rarely if ever pondering on the signs of God that are spread out all through the universe.

The sun rises, its face beaming, and it shines on us, as if conveying a message. But before it can speak, it sets. A tree

bursts forth with branches richly laden with leaves. The sea moves ceaselessly, cradling wave after wave. All of these want to say something. But a human being simply walks past them, without listening to their call. The loftiness of the skies and the beauty of the earth – all these are dimensions of this universal programme. They have so much to convey, but a person does not lend them his ear. He thinks them to be inert.

Is this glorious universe a museum of mute entities? No, not at all! The fact is that all these things have a message of God, which they continue to broadcast in an eternal, timeless language. But a person is so lost in other sounds that he does not hear the silent voice of the universe.

Once, while on a journey, I got off the train at a mid-way stop in order to offer my prayers. I asked some people on the platform where the west was in order to determine the proper direction for prayers. But no one had an answer to that simple question! I thought to myself, “The sun dawns here every day – that is a shining truth. But these people are so lost in themselves that they have no idea of east or west! How, then, will they know what message the sun conveys, every day of their lives, in its silent language?”

The train halted at another station, and I got off and stood on the platform. The sun had just set. It was a beautiful scene – tall trees silhouetted against the pale red sky that was streaked with clouds. “The beauty of all these comes from their loftiness!” I mused. “But a human being is not prepared to scale such heights. He doesn’t live at the heights of the trees, of the sun, of the clouds. Instead, he wallows in superficialities, in personal interests, false friendships and petty enmities. Instead of journeying with the rest of the universe, he prefers to remain closeted in his little shell. In a world where a heavenly environment awaits him, he forces himself to live in hell. This is the root cause of every form of evil in the human world. If an individual were to live at the lofty level of the rest

of the universe, his life would be as beautiful as the beautiful things that appear throughout Nature!

Listen to God's Voice in the Language of Silence



If you are in a room, you can measure the length and breadth of its ceiling. But if you are in a big field, under the open sky, all your criteria for measuring things fail to gauge the length and breadth of the sky.

The same holds true for the rest of the universe. A little seed gradually grows into a tree, which is a world in itself. Who can narrate how this happens? The light that the sun pours out, the circulation of the winds, the songs of the birds, the gurgling of the brooks, and innumerable similar things – we see them with our eyes, but it is not possible to express them in words.

Truth is a finer thing than that which can be expressed in words. In reality, Truth starts where the tongue gets stuck and falls silent. Significance and meaning appear where words stop and cannot go further. God speaks in the language of silence, but we want to listen to Him in the language of noise! How, then, can we at all listen to God's voice? The most precious things in this world are conveyed in the language of silence. Those who know how to listen only to deafening din remain as unaware of these matters as a deaf person is of fine music.

This world of God's is infinitely beautiful. Its beauty cannot be described in words. When a person sees the world,

he loses all control. He wants to become part of the winds, to melt into the trees, to lose himself in the loftiness of the skies. But his limitations stand in the way of this desire. Perhaps heaven is this – when an individual is made free of his limitations so that he can enter that beautiful world of Paradise that lasts forever.

The civilized world that human beings have made is starkly different from God's world. The vehicles people have built emit pollution and create a terrible noise. But in God's world, light travels at the astounding speed of 1,86,000 miles per second without making any noise or emitting pollution at all! Human beings live together in such a way that they always face various types of problems from one another. But in God's world, the winds blow without coming into conflict with anything at all. We emit our waste in the form of carbon dioxide and sweat and so on and dump it into the outside world, but in God's world, trees emit their 'pollution' in the form of oxygen, without which human and animal life would have been impossible. Flowers emit their fragrance as their 'pollution'. We litter our streets with mounds of garbage, even though it is against the law. But in God's world, everyday enormous amounts of 'garbage' are produced without anyone even knowing or noticing this, and this 'garbage' is recycled and reconverted into useful things.

If you deeply ponder on these marvels of the universe, you will be struck by a sense of how utterly helpless a person is! And you will be struck by silence, too, being unable to utter even a single word.

Seeing the Inner Reality of Things



In August 1962, when the Russian space traveler Andriyan Nikolayev returned to earth from his journey in space, he addressed a press conference in Moscow, where he exclaimed:

When I landed on earth, I wanted to kiss it!

This world is suffused with innumerable favourable things for a person to avail of. No other place anywhere in the known world affords the same sort of favourable things. When Nikolayev travelled far into space, he was simply awe-struck! There was nothing there in the huge expanse that could provide human beings solace and comfort. After this experience, when he landed on earth, he realized the value of this planet, in exactly the same way as when one is very thirsty one realizes the value of water. The world, along with all its many favourable possibilities, appeared so very precious and lovable to him!

This is what is termed as ‘making something a deity’ in the terminology of Islam. A human being does not see the Creator directly, and so he makes a created thing his deity. But a true believer is one who passes by external things and reaches to the inner realities, who realizes that all visible things are actually created by the invisible Creator. He knows that everything in the whole cosmos has been brought into being by some immensely great Being. Such a person, on seeing the myriad created things of the universe, is led to the Creator, whom he

takes to be his everything. He devotes all his finer emotions for God.

The Russian cosmonaut experienced an overwhelming joy on finding himself back on earth. But an individual should go much beyond that state on finding God! A true believer is he who, when he sees the sun, sees the light of God in it, who witnesses the limitlessness of God in the vast expanses of the skies, who finds the fragrance of God in the scent of a flower, who observes the mercy of God in the flow of a river. The difference between a true believer and someone else is that the vision of the latter is fixed on created things, while the former has gone beyond created beings and has established a connection with the Creator. An ordinary person thinks that the beauty of created beings is intrinsic to them, that it belongs to them. And so, he is entangled in them. On the other hand, a true believer sees the beauty of the Creator in the beauty of created things and surrenders himself to the Creator.

An ordinary person submits to things of the world, while a true believer's submission is for the Creator of the world.

The Innate Emotion to Find the Creator



Human beings have a strange feature that is not shared by any other creature. And that is, the unlimited desire to search. Every human being has this desire within him, from birth itself, which makes him constantly search for something unknown that he has not yet found. No success or

achievement whatsoever manages to satisfy this desire. Nor does any failure destroy it. Philosophers have termed this as the desire for the ideal.

It is this desire for the ideal that is the real and final moving-force behind all human activities. If this desire were absent, all activities in this world would all of a sudden stop. It is this powerful desire of the human mind that Sigmund Freud wrongly termed as sexual desire. Alfred Adler wrongly branded it as the desire for power. William McDougall erroneously claimed that it was a mysterious result of the combination of various animalistic instincts in man. Karl Marx tried to prove that it was the desire for material or economic accumulation, which, in his view, controlled all other human activities. In order to write all these explanations off as erroneous, it is enough to note that even when some people acquire the things that the above-mentioned thinkers labeled this desire to actually represent, it did not make them at all content. Rather, their inner being remained as restless as before, and they were no different from other people.

For thousands of years, people have been trying to search for this ideal in the things of this world. Yet, no one could gain the satisfaction of having obtained the complete answer to this quest. In this regard, an Emperor is as unsatisfied as an unemployed pauper. This long experience of humankind is enough to prove that the answer to an individual's quest is not present in the visible world. Rather, the answer lies in the world that is not visible – the unseen realm – a world that a person can sense but cannot see.

The fact is that this desire is the desire for God. The Creator is the ideal which a human being is so anxious to find. The thing that everyone is actually in search of is God, the Creator of every soul. On the basis of his or her innate nature, every person remains continuously in search of God. This inner emotion drives people to the things of the world. They imagine that perhaps these things are the answer to their

search. But when they obtain these things and experience them at close range, they realize that they were not what they were looking for.

Seeing Wonders in Usual Phenomena



In 1957, Russia sent its first Sputnik satellite into space. In 1981, America sent its first space shuttle, Columbia, into space, with two people on board. It was made in such a way that it could be used for around a hundred space journeys.

Columbia weighed around 75 tonnes. It cost a huge amount of money. It took nine years to construct. It travelled in space at a speed of 26,000 miles per hour, remaining in space for 54 hours, and revolving around the Earth 36 times. It traversed a total distance of around 10,00,000 miles and then returned to Earth, landing in the Californian desert. When it entered the atmosphere on its way back to Earth, the friction that it encountered caused its outside frame to shoot up to an astounding 1,15,000 degrees Celsius, but arrangements had been made to maintain a comfortable temperature inside for the two people on board. The shuttle landed at almost exactly the appointed time – with a difference of just 10 seconds! Some 200,000 people gathered to see Columbia land. Besides, millions more saw the event on television.

John Young was one of the two people on board that Columbia flight. After being in a state of weightlessness for

many hours, he was so stunned on returning back to Earth that he burst out:

What a way to come to California!

John Young found all of this astounding – travelling in space in a shuttle and then landing in California in this fashion, and so on. But the fact of the matter is that, actually, every single thing in this world is astounding! Every journey, whether on foot or in a vehicle or in a space shuttle, entails so many factors and cosmic causes that if you really think about it, an ordinary journey can seem so amazing that you will cry out, “My walking, on my two feet, from one place to another is as amazing as travelling in the Columbia shuttle into space and landing in the Californian desert!”

Most people are struck only by the wonders of unusual events. A truly intelligent person is one who sees wonders even in seemingly ordinary or usual phenomena.

The Delight of Discovery



The sun is 12,00,000 times the size of the Earth, and is located more than 900,00,000 miles from us. Yet, we get adequate light and heat from it. Compared to many other stars, the sun is quite small, but because it is relatively close to the Earth, it seems very big to us. Actually, most stars are much bigger than the sun and emit even more light than it. Innumerable stars – an amazing world of light and heat – are scattered all over space. Despite being in existence for trillions of years, their light and heat have not been extinguished.

How does such immense energy get produced in the stars? After long years of research, Hans Bethe discovered that the secret of this lies in the ‘carbon cycle’. For this discovery, he won the 1967 Nobel Prize for Physics.

It must have been a moment of immense and inexpressible delight for Dr. Bethe when he discovered the ‘carbon cycle’. His wife, Rose, related that one night she was with her husband in the desert in New Mexico. In the desert, stars appear to shine with great intensity. Rose looked up at the sky and exclaimed, “How brightly the stars are shining!” At this, Dr. Bethe remarked, “Do you realize that just now you are standing next to the only human who knows why they shine at all?”

Hans Bethe’s discovery related to just one extremely small aspect of the Truth. He had discovered the ‘carbon cycle’ of the stars. But the question is, ‘Why is there this carbon cycle at all in the stars?’ A true believer discovers this great secret in the form of God. Faith in God is a discovery that is greater than all other discoveries.

But it is so strange that when a scientist discovers something quite minor, he is overwhelmed with emotion. In contrast, a person of conventional faith claims to have discovered the greatest reality – God – but yet he experiences no emotional upheaval.

Perhaps, then, those who claim to have faith in God have not discovered God as yet!

Experience of the Presence of God



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 related that it was an astounding experience to set foot on the moon. 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 had 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 things is a mirror of the Creator. Because we have become so used to them, we do not realize how amazing they all are. But when someone suddenly steps on the moon and beholds this creation of God up close for the first time ever, 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 for the first time on the moon sees it. If we begin to see our world in this way, at every moment we will experience the 'presence of God'. We will begin to live as if we are in the neighbourhood of God, and that at every moment He is present before our eyes.

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

The greatest achievement for someone in this world is to begin seeing God, to feel the presence of God near him. If he is truly alive, he will see the light of God in the brilliant rays of the sun. He will discern reflections of God in the verdant trees. He will experience the touch of God in the softness of the breeze. 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 is present everywhere. This you can know if you acquire the eyes that you need to truly see.

The Table Spread of the Cosmos



The Quran says that God is the light of the skies and the earth. This means that the world is entirely an expression of divine attributes. A sensitive heart will see reflections of

God in everything that exists here. The entire cosmos is a table spread of divine sustenance.

If faith in God gives someone the sensitivity that true faith in God engenders, he will see God's light everywhere in the universe. When the breeze touches him, He will feel that he is experiencing the touch of God in the softness of the breeze. In the flow of a stream he will see the mercy of God expressing itself. When he hears the chirruping of birds, his heart will witness a soul-stirring tune played on a divine musical instrument. When he smells a fragrant flower, it would be like bathing in divine fragrance.

For a true believer, the entire universe is a table spread of divine sustenance. Every single thing in this world has been made in such a way that on seeing it, a person can draw a lesson. Those who truly love God can experience these divine states.

The Flame-of-the-Forest is a tree that bears amazingly beautiful flowers. When autumn comes and its leaves fall, the tree appears like a dry stick. But then a silent revolution happens. It sprouts brilliantly-hued flowers! What was a dry stick is now laden with stunning flowers. It seems as if God has specially sent His beautiful umbrella for something that was thought to be a useless stick.

This happens so that some servant of God may see it and exclaim, "Lord! I, too, am a Flame-of-the-Forest tree. If you want, you can cause beautiful flowers to bloom on me! I am a dried stick. If you want, you can make me green! I am leading a meaningless existence. If you want, You can fill my life with meaningfulness! I am standing on the edge of Hell. If you want, you can admit me into Heaven!"

Awakening One's Inner Capacity



This world, that is full of meaning, is a world that expresses God's splendour. Who is there who can express God's splendour in human language? The truth is that where words cease, meaning begins. When we try to explain the meaning of something, we are actually not explaining it. In fact, we are actually subtracting something from it. We conceal it, under a curtain of words.

You cannot understand a reality that is suffused with meaning simply through saying words about it. A blind man cannot come to know what a flower is simply by being told about it in words. In the same way, if someone has not awakened the inner capacity to see meaningful inner realities, he cannot become aware of them, not even if all the words in the dictionary are read out before him!

Divine guidance is the voice of every person's nature. But only he is blessed with this guidance who truly has the desire for this guidance, who is driven restless by the urge to find the Truth. Such a person has already crossed half the distance, as it were, on the path of guidance. He is listening to the divine voice, hidden deep inside himself, asking him, 'Am I not your Lord?' He has awakened his inner capacity to comprehend the language of meaning. Because of his detachment from the unreal world, he becomes so close to the real world that he begins to hear angels whisper.

The Prophet is a helper for those on this path of the search

for the Truth. People go through all of these above-mentioned experiences in an unclear, ambiguous manner before they obtain knowledge of the Truth through the Prophet. Later, when a person comes to know about the Prophet's message, it becomes the voice of his intrinsic nature. He finds the wordless indications that are hidden inside him in the language of words. The Quran and the reader of the Quran become counterparts of each other. The Quran becomes him, as it were, and he, as it were, becomes the Quran.

The Importance of Gratitude



People are generally not content with what they have. Instead, they run after what they do not have. Because of this mentality, everyone is leading a life that is rife with discontent. Someone who appears to be very fortunate, someone whom others envy, is actually as discontented as those who envy him.

Everyone has received some or the other blessing. But if a person lacks gratitude, he will be constantly attracted to what he does not have, while considering the blessings that he does have to be of no value. In such a case, he cannot experience gratitude to God. He is denied the most important thing that he should nourish in his heart.

God has made this world in such a way that here complete comfort and ease are not possible for anyone. If you run away from a place because of some problem there and go to another place, you will soon discover that there, too, problems exist.

If a poor man has problems, a rich man has problems, too. If an unemployed person has problems, so, too, does a powerful man. In this world that has been made as a testing-ground, no one at all is exempt from problems. Given this, what you should do is to face the problems that you are confronted with and carry on with your onward journey. Your sole concern should be to acquire God's pleasure, and not to become the master of a problem-free life, because that is simply not possible before the life Hereafter.

Deception of Greatness



Air Marshal Abdul Latif had 40 years of experience of flying planes. In August 1981, he flew a Russian-made MIG-25 in order to test it. After flying for half an hour, he landed. When he stepped out of the plane, he remarked:

The flight made even the Himalaya's look small! (The Times of India, August 26, 1981)

When a plane travelling at a speed faster than sound flies over the Himalayas, a passenger sitting inside will naturally see the Himalayas as small and might develop strange assumptions about his own supposed greatness. But this misunderstanding is wiped off if the plane crashes against a Himalayan peak. Even a slight brush against a mountain will immediately cause the plane to go up in flames, reducing it and all the passengers inside to ashes in a trice.

In this world, when someone acquires some perceived greatness, he quickly falls prey to misunderstandings about

himself, although every 'greatness' in this world is like someone looking at the Himalayas from a high-speed plane. Such a passenger considers his travelling in the plane as a big thing, but it is actually nothing but deception of the imagination. A slight change in conditions is enough to convince him that there is no truth whatsoever in his misunderstanding.

In this world, no one has the capacity to obtain by himself all the innumerable favourable things and factors that are required in order to obtain something. It is only God who puts together various favourable causes and brings into being any particular development. In this entire affair, external causes are simply a curtain, as it were. And so, to be truly realistic, one has to acknowledge God's Divinity and, in relation to Him, one's utter servitude. Externally, it may seem that one acquires something through one's own efforts, but one should actually consider it to have come from God. One may appear, from the outside, to be big; but one should realize oneself to actually be very small. One may appear to be flying high in the skies above, but one must feel oneself to be low.

The test that an individual has to face is to pass by external deception and arrive at the Truth. He must consider and realize every supposed greatness in this world to be false. Few, however, succeed in tearing apart this curtain of deception.

Need For a Guide



When we feel hungry, we try to satisfy our hunger, and we know that there is something in the form of food that

can satisfy our hunger. We feel thirsty, and we perform some action to quench our thirst. We know that there is something in the form of water that can quench our thirst.

The same is true for Truth. An individual is always in search of Truth. The search itself proves that there is a Truth that one should know. Truth is much greater than eating and drinking. When the answers to our smaller requirements are present in this world, why won't the answer to our greatest requirements be present here, too?

The question about the Truth is about discovering the reality of one's self. Suddenly, one day, you are born into this world. You did not take birth on your own. You now find yourself in a vast world, a world that is separate from you. You live in this world for 50 or 60 years, and then you die. On your own you have no idea where you go after death. The question of the Truth relates to finding the truth about these realities of life and death.

You cannot learn about the Truth in the same way as you learn how to obtain food to satisfy your hunger and water to quench your thirst. Truth is limitless and eternal. If Truth were not limitless and eternal, it would not be Truth at all. But a human being's reason and age are both limited. A limited mind cannot reach the limitless Truth. A person who has a limited age cannot discover the Truth by himself.

This inability to reach the Truth by oneself proves that in order to know the Truth we need prophets. What is prophethood? Prophethood means that the Truth, to which an individual cannot reach on his own, itself reaches him; the Truth that we cannot know through our own efforts itself appears and tells us about itself.

Through the prophets, God makes people aware of the Truth beforehand. The prophets announced that a person should obey God out of his own free will. Everything else in the world obeys God, but out of compulsion. A human being should do so, but out of his own free choice. On the basis

of the freedom to choose that God has given him, a person should become choice-less and powerless in front of God. Despite the freedom that God has given him, he should willingly surrender to God. For those who do this, the reward is Heaven.

The Darkness Shall End!



In this world of God's, a human being appears to be a contradiction. In such a world where the sun rises at exactly its appointed time, man says something today and then denies it the next day! In such a world where even from hard, dry stones water can be squeezed out, man cruelly oppresses his fellow man. In a world where the moon sheds its light on all creatures without discrimination, man behaves in one way with somebody and in another way with somebody else. In a world whose meaningfulness expresses itself in the fineness of the beauty of a flower, man behaves more cruelly than a thorn. In a world where the wind blows all around, like a selfless servant, man lives in such a way as if there is no other purpose to his life than promoting what he regards as his own personal interests. In a world where one tree never troubles another, one man never ceases from tormenting another. One person derives malicious pleasure in seeing another being destroyed.

All this happens on a daily basis in this world. But God does not interfere in this. He does not end this contradiction. Seen in the universal mirror of His creation, God seems so very beautiful, but in the grief-filled realm of human existence, how

different His face seems to appear! Horrific things happen in front of God, but this does not stir Him at all. God sees people being slaughtered, but He does not bother about this one bit. He sees the most barbaric things being done to the most sensitive person in the universe, but this does not make Him anxious or uneasy at all. Is God an idol of stone? Is He a statue that sees everything but does not express His reaction to it all?

This is the question that has most troubled thinking people in every age. But this question arises only because we do not take account of God's wisdom with regard to His creatures. In God's creation plan, this world is a testing ground. We, however, in our foolishness, want to think of it in the form of a place where rewards and punishments for good and evil actions respectively should be meted out. We want that what is to happen on the coming Day of Judgment should happen today, before our very eyes.

Every day, the darkness of night is dispelled by the spreading light of the sun. Likewise, the darkness of life will definitely get over one day, oppression will end, the arrogant and the defiant shall have to bow down, and those who remain on the path of the Truth will be rewarded. All this will happen in its fullness, but it will happen after death, in the Hereafter, and not before it.

This World and the Hereafter



What is an individual's greatest longing? It is to lead a life full of happiness. This is the greatest dream that people have dreamt in every age. Every person lives with this dream. But everyone dies without this dream of his being fulfilled. All philosophies and ideologies, all human efforts, revolve round this one thing. But till today, human beings have failed to realize this dream at the intellectual and at the practical level.

There is just one cause for this failure. And that is that everyone wants to have their dreams fulfilled in this, present world. But the experience of tens of thousands of years have proved a single point – that the present world is insufficient for this desire to be fulfilled. The limitations of the present world and the wrong use of God-given human freedom are a decisive barrier to the present world becoming the place where human dreams can be fulfilled.

We are still on the journey towards making our life successful when death overtakes us. We invent new machines, but new industrial problems emerge that render the new machines meaningless. We make great sacrifices and usher in new political systems, but the degeneration of those who come to occupy the seats of power in new systems make them completely pointless, for all practical purposes. We want to craft a life of our dreams for ourselves, but other people's envy, jealousy, pride, oppression and revenge come to the fore and we get entangled in all of this, so much so that we see the little

nest that we had hoped we could find safety and shelter in crumbling before our eyes and then we depart from this world.

All these continuous experiences prove that the world of our dreams cannot come into being in the present world and under the present conditions. For this, another world, and other conditions, are needed. Our hopes and dreams are in themselves a real human quest. But the place where these longings of ours will be fulfilled is the next world, the world after death, and not the present world, the world before death.

This is the only thing that makes our life in this world meaningful. Once we are aware of this reality, this world becomes for us an arena for making efforts that will determine our future in the eternal life after death. The next world is the world where we will face the results of our actions. Once we come to this realization, we come to know what our destination is, towards which we move with confidence and calmness.

If you take this world to be your destination, you will finally arrive at nowhere but frustration, despondency and mental disturbance. But if you have made the Hereafter your destination, this belief will open the doors for eternal peace to you.

In a world such as this present one, where one incurs losses all too often, only such a philosophy of life can be proper that conveys to us the secret of gaining through these losses.

Limitations of the Present World



It was a beautiful July morning. The sun had not yet risen, but streaks of light in the vast expanse of the sky announced that it was about to make its appearance. The sun's rays peeped out from behind the clouds that had bunched up on the horizon, painting the sky in brilliant colours. The verdant green of the trees, the chattering of the birds and the delicate morning breeze added to the beauty of the moment, and I found myself uttering these words:

This world of God's is limitlessly meaningful. But it becomes limitlessly meaningless when the Hereafter is not joined with it.

This world is amazingly delightful, but its delights do not remain for more than a few moments. The world is stunningly beautiful, but the eyes that see its beauty very soon lose their light and sight. People desperately crave for respect and happiness in this world, but they have not fully acquired these when the law of degeneration comes into play. This world has everything that people want, but it is not possible for them to get all of this here, even for the person who seems to have everything.

A human being is a perfect creation, but his tragedy is that, along with this, he is a victim of various types of limitations. He is surrounded by various unfavourable conditions. Human life, despite being perfect, remains meaningless until a person

enters a world that is free from every type of limitation and unfavourable condition.

God has made this perfect and eternal world in the form of Heaven. But no one can gain entrance into the world of Heaven just like that. The price of that perfect world to come is this present, imperfect world. One who can sacrifice this present world for the world to come alone will enter that heavenly world in the life after death. One who is not willing to make this sacrifice will also enter a world after death – but not the joyous and delightful world of Heaven, but, rather a world of eternal misery and despair.

Contradiction between the Human World and the Rest of the Cosmos



I was standing before a mountain, far from any human habitation. The place was surrounded by beautiful trees. Birds called out in sheer delight. Different types of insects crawled around. Witnessing all this, I felt a strange feeling pass through me. How great and how perfect must that God be who made such a vast world and then caused it to work in exact accordance with His plan!

How beautiful, and how innocent, is this world! Here, birds utter only those sounds that their Creator has taught them. Here, cats and sheep obtain their food in exactly the manner that has been established for them by birth. Here, trees grow in complete accordance with the pattern that their Lord has, from the very beginning, determined for them.

Here, rivers flow in accordance with the law that has been established for them since time immemorial. God's universe is a perfect collection of different entities. Here, every single thing works in just the same way as has been commanded by God, without even the most minor deviation.

But a human being's case is completely different. A person utters words from his mouth that have not been permitted by his Lord. He takes such things as his sustenance as his Master has forbidden him. He travels on roads on the journey of his life that God has declared to be out of bounds for him. A human being is a very small part of God's creation. But he revolts against the collective system of the vast universe. He creates strife in God's perfectly organized world. He injects contradictions in God's contradiction-free cosmos. He brings about disharmony in the harmonious cosmic whole. It is like smearing a beautiful painting and adding something faulty to it. It is like giving Satan a chance to act where Angels are at work.

God's astounding power and beautiful taste, whose evidence is present at every moment in the vast cosmos, rebuts the assumption that this state of affairs will remain the same forever. God's power definitely cannot allow this oppression. God's beautiful taste certainly cannot tolerate this. And so, that Day of Judgment will definitely arrive when this contradiction in the cosmos is resolved and God's will is followed in the human world in the same way as it is fully followed in the rest of the cosmos.

The Divine 'Operation'!



Once, in Phoenix, a town in America, a man was admitted to hospital. He had a severe problem in his stomach. The doctors said that he had to have an operation. And so, his stomach was operated upon. To their shock, the doctors discovered a diamond inside! It was this that had caused the man such intolerable pain. When the diamond was removed, it was found that it still had its price tag on it! It read, 'Price: 6500 dollars'.

The police were called in at once. They questioned the patient, who initially claimed that he had won the diamond as a reward and that he had swallowed it by mistake. But very soon, the truth was out – the man had stolen it from a shop! When he was going out of the shop, the shopkeeper suspected that he had been up to no good and went after him. When the man realized that he might be nabbed, he quickly swallowed the diamond! The police had been on the lookout for him, and now that they had found him, they arrested him. (*The Hindustan Times*, November 5, 1981)

The man was unable to digest the diamond that he had illegitimately acquired. He was compelled to discharge it from out his system, and so he himself become the living proof of his crime.

Exactly this sort of thing, but in a more severe form, is what is going to happen with everyone in the Hereafter.

In this world, people oppress one another, rob others of their rights, and refuse to respect and acknowledge their

fellow creatures. Despite doing all this, they think that they are ‘making it big’. Wielding their power and cunningness, they try to hide their crimes. But this is only till they do not encounter death. Death is, as it were, an ‘operation’ that God has devised for every person that brings outside whatever is inside him. It reveals whatever he had concealed. Just as a man’s stomach cannot digest a diamond, this universe of God’s cannot accept oppression and injustice.

The time is soon coming – the Day of Judgment – when the divine ‘operation’ will reveal the entire truth about people, and when they will have no alternative but to acknowledge their crimes.

Two Types of Souls



The Quran (91: 9-10) says: “He who purifies it will indeed be successful, and he who corrupts it is sure to fail.”

The present world is a testing-ground for us before the life of the Hereafter dawns. It is an opportunity for us to prepare for the Hereafter. If you leave this world and enter the world of the Hereafter as a noble and pure soul, you will be settled in the delightful environs of Heaven. And if you depart from this world for the world of the Hereafter as a soul laden with evil, you will be hurled into Hell.

The present world is, as it were, God’s nursery. Different types of plants are grown in a nursery. The gardener inspects all of them. Those that he does not want he plucks out and throws away. And the ones that he finds desirable he lifts from

their beds very carefully, so that they can grow and flourish in a garden.

In the present world, you are free to choose between two courses. You can choose to purify your soul or to pollute it. You can accept God's greatness and surrender yourself before Him. When you are faced with the Truth, you can choose to unhesitatingly acknowledge it. In your dealings with others, you can choose to reflect concern for their welfare and for justice. Whether it be in friendship or enmity, in every situation you can willingly choose to obey God's will, instead of your own whims or the prodding of your ego. If this is how you choose to be and opt to lead your life, you have cleansed your soul. And you will then be settled in the beautiful world of God's heaven.

But, on the other hand, you can choose to be immersed in your own self-perceived greatness. When confronted with the Truth, you can choose not to accept it. In your dealings, you can choose to be unjust and cruel. You choose to follow your own will, not God's will. If this is how you choose to be and behave, you have polluted your soul. The Lord of this universe will not accept you to be in His neighbourhood.

Why Such Lawlessness in the Human World?



The strangest thing in the world is how people just love to boss others around, how cunningness seems to be the rule rather than the exception, how good-hearted people seem

to count for nothing, and how sycophants rule the roost, while honest people, who do not hesitate to call the truth as the truth and falsehood as falsehood, have no respect or popularity here.

All this is happening in a world that, in its essence, is absolutely flawless – where a single tree stands as a stunningly beautiful model of perfection, where birds know of no other song but of beauty and peace, where the sun and the moon cannot help but pour out their light, where no star trespasses into the orbit of another to forcibly plant its own flag!

Observing this contradiction between man and the rest of the cosmos, some people claim that there are two gods: one, the god of light, and the other, the god of darkness. Some others argue that there is no god at all. If there were truly a god, they maintain, why is there such lawlessness in the human world?

But the reality is that this world is a testing-ground, where we are being constantly examined. The ideal world will come after this one, after death. The whole of creation other than man is a preliminary glimpse, as it were, to that ideal world. Just as the rest of creation fully obeys God, in the world to come human beings will do the same. As of now, in the present world, they enjoy God-given free will. They can choose to obey God, like the rest of creation, but they can also choose to disobey Him. The test that they are being constantly put to in this world is about what choice they make using this freedom.

In order to be tested in this world, it is necessary that a human being should have full freedom of action. It is as a result of this freedom that someone chooses to walk on the straight path, while someone else opts for a crooked one. But after the Day of Judgment only those people will be admitted into the ideal world of Heaven who provided evidence while in this present world of leading life in an ideal manner, of thinking and acting in the ideal way. Everyone else will be gathered

together and dumped in a universal litterbin, just as rubbish is collected together and thrown away.

Weigh Before You Are Weighed



In this world, every single thing has two forms: an external form, and an inner form. Here, in this world, it is possible for everyone to nurse all sorts of evils inside but to speak beautiful words and present a very charming exterior. The Day of Judgment will arrive in order to put an end to this difference between the external and the internal. The Day of Judgment will tear apart all external veils, pulling off the shells under which people conceal their true selves, exposing their inner realities.

What an astounding Day that will be, when the veils that now conceal these realities will be lifted! How many people who today are ensconced in the seats of justice will, on that Day, be seen standing in the criminal's dock! How many of those who today are considered to be Very Important People or VIPs, will, on that Day, be seen as even more lowly than worms and spiders! How many people who today seem to have a smart reply for everything, will, on that Day, be struck totally dumb!

Here, in this world, it is possible for someone to torment someone else even while being considered a great religious leader. He may be engaged in doing everything possible to garner name and fame, and yet may be widely known as a great 'crusader for Islam'. He may be abjectly unjust in his

dealings with others and yet be invited to preside over grand conferences about peace and justice. He may have no room for God in his personal life, but yet in public may have achieved renown as a great flag-bearer of religion. He may have no compassion and concern whatsoever for the oppressed and no desire to help them, and yet he may be touted about in the media as their most vociferous supporter.

God knows everyone's reality. But in this world, He keeps people's realities concealed from everyone. In the Hereafter, He will reveal everyone's reality. The time is coming when everyone will be measured in God's measuring scales, which will reveal what everyone's reality truly is.

This Day of Judgment will definitely come – it has been decreed by God. No one can delay it, and nor can anyone save himself from it. He alone will be truly successful on that day who today itself, in this very world, stands in the scales of God, because otherwise the only fate he will meet with in the Hereafter is utter devastation.

Encashing '1 Pound' Cheque for '1001 Pounds'



Stephen Priestley is a British artist. One day, four of his paintings were put up for sale at an auction. Their price was put at one pound. And so, when they were sold, Priestley received a cheque for that amount.

Priestley was furious at getting just a pound for his paintings. He thought the value of his paintings was much

more than that. And so, he fudged the numerals on the cheque and made it appear to be for 1001 pounds instead, and managed to get that sum from the bank. But, very soon, the bank staff found out that he had deceived them. Had was nabbed by the police and was sent to jail for cheating. (*The Hindustan Times*, October 2, 1981)

This incident is about something related to the goings-on in this world. But it has relevance to matters of the Hereafter as well. Many are those who have just 'one pound' worth of good deeds to their credit, but which they want to pass off and encash as '1001 pounds'! Someone is busy trying to make name and fame for himself while labeling his efforts as 'service of Islam'! Someone's actions are impelled by, narrow tribalism and communal prejudice, and yet he calls it an 'Islamic movement'! Someone is trying to promote his own political interests while claiming that he is championing the cause of 'establishing an Islamic social system'! Someone is running behind someone else simply in order to become rich and famous, while labeling this as 'Islamic brotherhood'! Someone is embroiled in debates and heated arguments and thinks that he is a great advocate of 'Islamic revival'! Someone is doing some minor reformist work, claiming that what he is doing is 'calling people to God' and 'communicating God's message'!

All these people are extracting their price in this world. They are delighted, trying to pass off their minor efforts as really great actions. But soon, death will destroy their wishful thinking. In the court that will be held on the Day of Judgment, all such people will be branded as deceivers, no matter if in today's world they succeed in encashing their 'one pound cheque' for '1001 pounds'!

Seek the Eternal World



Turtles live up to 500 years. Some trees can remain standing for a thousand years. Mountains and rivers can retain their glory for millions of years. But human life is not more than 50-100 years. Man, who appears to be the most noble and superior of all creatures, lives a very short life in comparison.

Even more strange than this is that this short human life is nothing but a continuous story of failure. An individual's life is so full of sorrow that the few moments of joy that he experiences seem to be nothing more than an aberration or even a delusion. Sickness, accidents, old age, dreams and hopes that are continuously trampled upon – that is what life generally seems. And in the end, after spending his days on earth in sorrow, a person accepts defeat in the face of death.

A poor man is unhappy that he does not have a house and enough money to meet his needs. But, on the other hand, the conditions of people whom a poor man envies are not very different. Having money creates even greater problems for a rich man than those that a poor man who has no money appears to face. A famous man, who is constantly surrounded by people, is so troubled and miserable inside that he cannot get a wink of sleep at night without consuming pills. In short, every person in this world is unhappy – each in different ways.

Even if you manage to save yourself from unfavourable conditions and acquire that good fortune that is called joy and peace, how long will that state last? Even if you garner, by some means or the other, an enormous treasury of joys, it will keep

you happy only just for a day, at the very most. And then the Angel of Death will suddenly arrive and grab you, and all your wealth or the army that you have mustered to protect you will not be able to save you. Death overtakes everyone – rich and poor alike. It enters triumphantly into both palace and hovel. Death is a person's greatest compulsion.

Death reminds a person to rise up beyond 'today' and to think of 'tomorrow' – of the eternal world after death. It tells an individual to search for success on the other side of life – in the world to come. A truly successful person is one who draws this lesson from death. If you remain deprived of this lesson, your joys, which you wallow in in this world, will soon be snuffed out and after death you will find yourself in utter darkness.

Minarets of Worldly Glory



Once, I struck up a conversation with a man who, some 30 years earlier, had been an ordinary mechanic. When I met him, he had become the owner of several factories. I remarked, 'Your business has expanded quite considerably!' He very happily replied, 'I've earned so much that even if my children don't work, they can comfortably eat for a hundred years!'

Now, this is an extreme example. However, today everyone's case is similar to this in some sense. Everyone is confident that he has 'settled' his matters once and for all, and that he is now free of any danger for at least a 'hundred years'.

Some people are happy by pleasing their elders. Someone is very glad that he has the title deeds to a huge property. Someone takes immense pride in his job and bank balance. Someone relies on his physical prowess and his penchant to boss over and control others. Someone has nothing, but yet he runs after others to flatter them and feather his own little nest. He thinks he has at last found a protective umbrella to stand under and that now nothing can harm him.

But when an earthquake strikes, it renders completely meaningless all such false supports. For an earthquake, there is no difference between a grand palace and a tiny hut. In its eyes, the strong and the weak are alike. It destroys the helpless in the same manner as it does those who think they have firm supports to bank on. It reminds us how utterly helpless a person truly is.

An earthquake is a prior indication from God that tells us what is finally going to happen to every one of us one day – the Day of Judgment. It is a sort of mini Day of Judgment that reminds of the great Day that will dawn one day. When fearsome tremors and upheavals force us to lose all consciousness, when buildings collapse like a house of cards, when the bowels of the earth are thrown up and what is on the surface of the earth is swallowed inside – at that moment, a person realizes that, in the face of the forces of nature, he is utterly helpless. He can only helplessly watch the dance of devastation happening around him, without being able to do anything about it at all.

The earthquake of the Day of Judgment will be a trillion times more severe than the earthquakes that happen in this world. At that time, all the supports that we lean on will be utterly shattered. People will be dumbstruck, completely losing all their intelligence. The minarets of glory that people have built for themselves will come crashing down, and nothing at all will remain of them. On that day, only those will have a support to lean on who had not taken the things

of this world as a support. On that day, only those people will be successful who had surrendered to God in this world, at a time when everyone else had forgotten God and had, instead, sought support from the things of the world.

Without an Identity Card



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 queue 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, prior to the arrival of that day, had made themselves eligible

for such a reward. These will be those who 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 possible respect, 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. For everyone else, their having neglected the task of proving themselves eligible for this while in the present world will become a barrier between them and God. In the Hereafter, too, they will not see God. On that day, when others will be rewarded, they will receive nothing but eternal regret.

A Bud that Will Bloom in Heaven



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

Elsewhere, it 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)

A hadith relates that Heaven and Hell are actually the result of the actions of people that are returned to them.

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 in this world. This worldly replica of Heaven is, as it were, a cash award that is 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 in this world experience the psychological states that make them eligible for Heaven in the Hereafter. Their hearts have been shattered into bits in the awareness of being in God's proximity and in the awareness that God is inspecting all their deeds. Expelling all feelings of envy, malice and revenge from their hearts, they have experienced divine forgiveness. In their tears of repentance, they have seen the mercy of a beneficent Master who forgives His servants who acknowledge their mistakes. They release people who are under their control so that their Lord can also set them free on that day when they will be in an infinitely more helpless condition themselves. They willingly surrender themselves before the Truth in the same way as others will fall flat on seeing God on the Day of Judgment.

A true believer is a flower of the garden of Heaven. In this world, he is, as it were, a bud that will burst into bloom in Heaven, in the world to come. He faces various trials and tribulations in this world, just as others will experience the same in the Hereafter. Within the different types of conditions that one faces in life is hidden everyone's Heaven and Hell. In the face of such conditions, if you react in a devilish manner, you prove yourself eligible for Hell. If you respond in an angelic manner, you prove yourself eligible for Heaven.

Fake Fruits and Flowers



These days, people have started manufacturing plastic flowers and fruits. They look just like real flowers and fruits. But if you smell a plastic flower, it has none of the fragrance of a real flower. If you bite into a plastic fruit, it has none of the taste of a real fruit. In just the same way, absurd forms of religiosity have appeared these days. On the face of it, they appear really grandiose, but if you examine them closely, they have none of the true essence of religion – which is, fear of God and genuine concern for other human beings. In this age of plastic, perhaps religiosity has become plastic, too.

Many people may appear to be very pious, but they are unwilling to accept their mistakes. They are not willing to sacrifice their egos for the sake of God. For their personal interests, they may get together with others and sink their differences and complaints. But in this entire world, there is no one who will set aside his differences and complaints and join hands with others for the sake of God.

The true religion is this: that a person attains to the truth that there is but one God of this entire universe. This God is the Creator of all things. He will gather all human beings after their death and take account of them. And then, on the basis of their deeds, He will put them into eternal heaven or eternal hell. This is such a serious fact that if it really seeps deeply into one's mind, his entire life is completely transformed. He becomes very careful about all things that lead people to the fires of Hell, and he becomes very eager about the things that

make someone worthy of the gardens of Heaven. He begins to fear God above everything else. He begins to love God above all else. He subdues his individual existence to live in the glory of God.

This growing awareness of God and the Hereafter makes a person become more attentive to, and responsible for, other creatures. If, by chance, he thinks ill of others, it will make him feel that he is hurling himself into the pit of Hell. Just the thought of indulging in high-handed behavior with others brings to his mind the fear that his action will lead angels to drag him to well. If he deals unjustly with people he feels he will be taken to task by God in the Hereafter. In his sight, every person appears not just simply as a human, but, rather, as a being whom God, along with all His angels, is standing together with.

Beware of Weeds Growing Within



In a field, besides the crops that a farmer has sown, there are also numerous weeds that grow on their own. They cause damage to the crops by consuming water and manure, and in this way they do not let the crops to grow fully.

If a farmer allows the weeds to grow as they like, they will ruin his crops. He will then never be able to reap a decent harvest. That is why he regularly weeds his field. He carefully removes each weed so as to clear the field of them and give his crops the chance to grow fully. Every farmer knows that it is not enough simply to sow seeds in his field. Along with this,

it is also essential to pluck out every weed. Otherwise, he will not be able to get the harvest that he hopes for.

This weeding of a field, as it were, is what every individual should do with regard to his own self. In the terminology of Islam, this is called *mubasabah*. As in a field, where crops grow along with weeds, whenever one obtains something good, along with it a 'weed' begins to grow, all on its own, from inside. It is important to be aware of the presence of this 'weed' and to remove it from inside oneself and throw it away. If you do not do this, you will face the same predicament as a field that is left without being weeded.

If someone acquires many worldly goods and means, he gets puffed up with an unwarranted sense of self-reliance. If he obtains political power, it engenders conceit. Likewise, wealth leads to miserliness, knowledge to pride, fame to pomp, and social respect to showing-off. All of these are, as it were, 'weeds' that, if not removed, will completely eat up or destroy one's virtues. And so, one should become one's own guard, and whenever one spots a 'weed' growing within oneself, one should pluck it out and throw it away.

If you do not engage constantly in this sort of introspection, you are bound to face ruin. You will become like a field whose crops have been over-run and destroyed by weeds that have been left to grow unchecked.

At the Same Level



On March 31, 1981, newspapers across the world had the same bold headlines: ‘Murderous Assault on American President!’ A young man had fired six bullets at the then President of America, Mr. Ronald Reagan. One bullet hit his lungs. Mr. Reagan was rushed to the hospital. He was in a bad shape, having lost much blood. But owing to the timely medical help that he received, he survived.

Before becoming the American President, Mr. Reagan had been a film actor. He proved unable to obtain much of a position in the film world. After this, he entered politics, and in 1980, he was elected as the American President. When he was recovering in hospital, he said to the doctors and nurses:

If I'd got this much attention in Hollywood, I would never have left!

(The Hindustan Times, April 1, 1981)

The person who had shot at Ronald Reagan was a man called John Hinckley. He had fallen in love with a young film actress named Jodie Foster. He would send her letters, but she did not pay him any attention. Finally, a day before he attacked Mr. Reagan, he wrote a letter to her, saying:

Now you'll know who I am.

(The Hindustan Times, April 2, 1981)

By firing those bullets at Ronald Reagan, John Hinckley, whom virtually no one then knew, suddenly shot into headlines of all the newspapers of the world. All the television and radio

stations were abuzz with talk about him. With the press of the trigger of a gun, he had acquired that 'fame' that innumerable people spend their entire lives working for and yet fail to attain.

If someone appears to be a criminal and somebody else seems to be innocent but both hanker after fame, it means that both exist on the same plane. The law of this world deals with people according to their external conditions. But the Hereafter is the plane where people will be dealt with on the basis of their true, inner personality. Someone presents himself to be a great champion of religion simply in order to gain name and fame. Someone else becomes a leader for precisely the same purpose. The consequences that both will face will be the same in God's eyes.

Your Actions Should Have A Spiritual Dimension



If there is a hole at the bottom of a bucket and you pour water into it, all the water will flow out and nothing will remain inside. The same is true for human beings. Only those actions of yours are worthy actions that provide you something meaningful in terms of your own inner development. If you appear to be busy doing things, but these actions do not contribute to nurturing and developing your inner being, they have no value whatsoever. Only those actions are worthy that promote awareness in you and transform you as a person, actions that stir an upheaval deep in your soul, in your very

being, drawing you to higher levels of truth. This achievement is the true criterion for gauging the success or worth of any action. Only that action is worthy if it creates this state in you, that offers you this gift. An action that does not provide you this is like pouring water in a bucket full of holes.

What is of importance is not what you are doing, but, rather, what is happening to you as a result of doing something. If you have many activities that keep you 'busy', then your being 'busy' is simply 'idle business' and nothing more. It is like the air existing, but without oxygen; like the water existing, but without the capacity to quench thirst; like food existing, but being unable to provide energy to the one who eats it; like the sun existing, but not giving its light to others. Such existence is the worst sort of non-existence actually. If your actions do not become 'spiritual' food for you, diet for your spiritual nourishment, they are not actions at all. Rather, they are various forms of inaction, or something even more meaningless.

If you pour water on a stone, it appears to get wet. But the stone does not know the thrill and wetness of water. It has not experienced that aspect of water. On the other hand, when a thirsty man drinks water, it rejuvenates him completely. He enjoys an inner experience of the very reality of water.

This example indicates what people routinely do, on the one hand, and what they should do, on the other. In the name of religion, people often simply perform a set of actions in a perfunctory, ritualistic and formal manner. They utter words, but these do not turn into their heartbeat. They do some physical actions that involve their limbs, but these do not touch their souls. All that they do in their 'busy-ness' does not vibrate in their hearts and minds.

In order to be meaningful, our actions must become spiritual experiences for us. They should repeatedly provide our inner being with spiritual nourishment. Our physical actions must stir an upheaval in our non-physical selves. Only

those actions are truly meaningful that transform you as a person. Actions that do not transform you have, in reality, no value at all. They are like the stone that appears to get wet when water is poured on it but fails to experience the sheer thrill of the quenching of thirst experienced by a person when he drinks a glass of water!

Offering One's Self to God



If someone is injected with blood that is other than his blood group, his body does not accept it. At once, his body produces antibodies, and the injected blood is expelled. In the same way, a part of the body that is badly burnt is sometimes treated by skin grafting, by stitching on a bit of skin from another part of one's own body. But if you try using someone else's skin for this purpose instead of yours, in a few days' time your body will recognize it as alien. Blood will stop circulating in that part of your body, and the grafted bit of skin will fall off.

Remarking on this, the Scottish-Canadian pathologist William Boyd (d. 1979), author of a book on Pathology, explained:

Self will not accept non-self.

The small self – man – is an example of self-respect. From this, one can draw analogies with regard to the honour and respect of the Bigger Self, which is God. The fact is that God is more respectful and honourable than all human beings who seek self-respect, put together. He loves unity more than all

unity-loving people put together. God cannot tolerate any sort of dualism, under any circumstances whatsoever.

Who are those fortunate people who will be declared as God's accepted servants in the Hereafter? It is they who have shattered the shell of self and have agreed to lose themselves in God's Self, who are selfless and have prostrated before the one God. They have made God their sole concern and are no more enmeshed in the superficialities of the material world.

It is difficult for a person to acknowledge anyone but himself, thinking it to be an affront to his self. Whenever someone appears to acknowledge someone, often it is just out of fear or some self-serving motive. An individual hesitates to offer his self to anyone. But the Creator has demanded of a person this gift of the self which he is not ready to give to anyone. This is the meaning of Islam. A Muslim is he who is willing to give his very self to his Creator, who surrenders himself totally to God, who obeys God in every situation. There is no doubt that for a human being this is to make what he otherwise simply cannot tolerate into something that he can. God had made this very thing the price of His Paradise. The blessing of Paradise is for those fortunate souls who can offer its price in the form of this gift.

Wrong Comparison between God and Man



A human being has always erred in trying to understand God, and in understanding himself, too. He has thought

God to be like himself, and he to be like God. This mistake has been made by man in every age. The whole of human history is the story of this mistake and its consequences.

To think God to be like man is to try to bring God to the human level. All forms of wrong notions about God are a product of this mistake, involving assumptions about God based on wrong analogies between man and Him.

We come into this world through biological parents. On this basis, it was assumed that if there is a God, He, too, must have a parent or parents, that there must have been someone before God, who brought God into being. Because the eternal God is not physically visible to an individual, he began denying His existence. Observing himself, reflecting on the fact that he himself is a created being, should have led a person to acknowledge the existence of the Creator. But because of the above-mentioned analogy that people drew between human beings and God, they were not ready to accept Him.

But many of those who accepted God made the very same mistake, albeit in a different way. They observed that when people do something, it is often with the direct or indirect help of many other people. On this basis, they began attributing partners and helpers to God. Among human beings, the recommendation of 'big' people with access to those in power and authority helps in getting things done. Accordingly, it was assumed that God, too, had some special people who were very close to Him, who had great influence in His court and whose recommendation God accepted.

Human beings are subordinated to their emotions. Often, they ignore the demands of Truth and decide things under the sway of their emotions. Drawing an analogy from this, people invented the belief that God had a special emotional link with members of a special group or community, and that His relations with them were altogether different from His relations with the rest of humankind.

All such beliefs are a negation of God's divinity. But in

their foolishness, people often cling to such baseless thoughts and imaginary beliefs.

To consider oneself to be like God is to imagine that one is the master of one's destiny, and that one is completely free to do whatever he wants or to abstain from whatever he wants to. It is to imagine that one is free to devise the principles of one's life as one wishes and to determine what is permissible and what is forbidden through one's own reasoning.

Every such effort is, as it were, tantamount to putting oneself in God's place, arrogating to oneself a right that is actually God's alone. Every such supposition is completely false, because a human being, in reality, is a helpless creature, and he can in no sense acquire the status of the Creator.

The Reward for Patience



Patience is greatly stressed in the Quran. The Quran tells us that if someone commits excesses against you and you could not exercise patience, you can respond to him in an equal way. But this is only by way of concession. Otherwise, the higher level of responding is to forgive him, and, instead of exacting revenge, to adopt the approach of reform. If you respond in this way you will get your reward from God, and no harm will befall you. Thus, the Quran says: "Let harm be requited by an equal harm. But whoever pardons and amends will find his reward with God. He does not love the wrongdoers." (42:40)

In life, one is repeatedly faced with difficulties at the hands of others. Someone promises you something but does not live

up to it. Someone misuses his position of authority to torment you. You hear a complaint about someone, and then you set about trying to do everything to ruin him. You take advantage of a situation to rob someone of his rights. Someone's jealousy on seeing you progress is so intense that he wants nothing but your destruction. And so on.

In most cases, someone who has been oppressed by someone else burns with the desire for taking revenge. He refuses to agree to forget and forgive the wrong done to him. No doubt, it is extremely difficult in such a situation for him to forget the bruises that have been inflicted on his heart. But if he leaves the matter to God and bears with it for God's sake, his action will never go to waste. What he could not obtain from fellow human beings he will receive from God.

If you give your word to someone, it is as if you are giving him a cheque that can be encashed when you act on your promise. But if when the time comes for you to act you go back on your word, it is like refusing to honour the cheque that you had signed when it is presented for payment. This is, of course, a very bitter experience for the victim of your action. But if he bears with it patiently, God promises that He will reward him for this. The 'cheque' that could not be 'encashed' in a 'human bank' will be encashed in the 'divine bank', whether in this life or in the Hereafter

Remembrance of God in Times of Ease



In May 1982, the editor of *The Hindustan Times* did a field-study to understand the mentality of Indians. On the basis of his research, he concluded this about them:

When a catastrophe strikes, God is tops. When all is tranquil, money manages to push God down to the second place.

This is true not only of Indians, however. It applies to most people across the globe actually. A person remembers God when he is in difficulty or feels helpless. At that time, he thinks only of God. But when the situation improves and he is no longer faced with any problem, he makes his perceived material interests his sole concern.

But this sort of religiosity is no religiosity at all. It is simply an expression of a person's mindset – of having forgotten his Lord. He does not remember God when he should, and then God shows him how utterly helpless he actually is. In making an individual face various trials and troubles, God lifts the veil of negligence from his eyes, forcing him to recognize how utterly dependent he actually is on Him. And when this happens, a person gets terribly frightened and calls out to God.

A human being is completely free, having been bestowed with the gift of free will. God desires that a person should, of his own free will, and not out of compulsion, worship and surrender Him. And so, a person's remembrance of God is

true remembrance when he remembers God when he is in comfort and ease. To forget God when you are happy and in ease and to rush to God when you face some difficulty has no value whatsoever in God's eyes.

Those who consider wealth to be the greatest thing have made a false god their deity. How can something that cannot be a support when you are in trouble, something that you yourself forget in moments of extreme difficulty, be anyone's deity?

When Death Approaches



On March 30, 1981, the then American President, Ronald Reagan, confidently stepped out of the White House. A convoy of cars accompanied him to Washington's Hilton Hotel. He delivered a speech in the hotel's hall. His speech was greeted with much applause. He came out of the hotel laughing, surrounded by a crowd. He was just a short distance from his bullet-proof limousine when, suddenly, someone began shooting at him. A young man called John Hinckley fired six bullets at him in two seconds. One bullet hit Mr. Reagan in the chest. He started bleeding profusely and was rushed to hospital. A news reporter described his visage on being fired in the following words:

Mr. Reagan appeared stunned. The smile faded from his lips.

(The Times of India, March 31, 1981)

Here, in this world, a person thinks that he is free. He says and does whatever he likes, without any fear. If he acquires

great wealth, he begins to think that his future is political power, he behaves as if there is no one who can snatch it from him. Everyone looks so very confident! Everyone laughingly walks towards his own 'limousine'! But then, suddenly, the curtain is lifted, and the Angel of Death whisks a person away from this world into the next.

This is the most extremely awesome moment in every person's life. When this moment arrives, one is ridden with fear on facing a condition that one had never expected. Suddenly, a person realizes that what he had all along believed to be the greatest reality was nothing but pure deception. He had thought himself to be free, but he now realizes that he is utterly helpless. He thought he had everything, in the form of wealth and family, but he now sees himself as totally empty-handed. He had thought that he was powerful, but now he knows that is more powerless than a fly or mosquito. He had thought he had many people with him, but now he finds himself totally alone.

Pity the man who does not know the thing that he must know above everything else!

Deception Everywhere



Today's world is a world of deception. People glibly use slogans to advance their own perceived interests in the name of serving humanity or their community. Everyone seems to have become an expert in deploying words to seek to justify their oppressive ways in the name of truth and justice.

Just about everyone seems to know how to quote the law in such a way as to pass off their crimes as innocence.

This is the condition of people who worship the world. But the condition of many of those who seem to be worshippers of God is no different. They have invented beliefs and practices in order to pass off their irreligiousness as piety.

People have discovered a God who, so they believe, one does not need to fear. They have found a Prophet, who, so they think, has come only so that he can definitely intercede for them with God, despite all their misdeeds. They have won such a Hereafter which, so they imagine, is for them alone, with Hell supposedly being only for others. They have obtained a form of worship that is, so they believe, compatible with arrogance and jealousy. They have come to know about a form of fasting that is, so they presume, not voided by lies and oppression. They have got such a religion in hand that is only a subject of debate and heated discussion, and not something to be practised. They have found out a recipe for Islamic activism, that is actually a quest for personal leadership and communal political advancement in the guise of Islam.

But fake gold is believed to be gold only so long as it is not tested with a touchstone. Likewise, all this deception can continue only till God sets up His scales of justice. Today, a person enjoys freedom, in order that he can be tested. For the time being, he can do what he wants. But when this period of testing is finished, he will find himself utterly helpless. He will want to speak, but words will fail him. He will want to flee, but he will find it impossible to.

This will be the day of truth. On that day, the garb of deception that people have donned will be taken away, and people will be revealed to be as they truly are. Taking advantage of the freedom they now enjoy, which has been given to them in order to test them, they have concealed their reality. But on that day, their reality will be fully exposed. A person's reality is fully known to God even now, of course, but on the Day of Judgment it will be laid bare before him.

The Exception of the Human World



Shaikh Saadi (1195-1226), the famous Persian poet, once remarked, 'I fear God, and, after God I fear the one who does not fear God.' Shakespeare said somewhat the same thing, but in a different way. He is said to have commented that man is the only animal that he feared.

You know beforehand how many things in this world behave or react. You already know about fire, that if you thrust your hand into it, it will burn you. You already know, beforehand, that it will not behave in the same way if you keep your hand away from it. The same holds true for all other things. Even about dangerous wild animals we know beforehand that they do not attack human beings unless provoked, and that if they attack, it is only out of self-defence.

This means that everything in this world works according to certain fixed regulations. By taking into account these regulations, you can save yourself from being harmed by them. But human beings are the only creatures whose actions do not have any such fixed or predictable rules. They are fully free, and can do whatever they want, whenever they want.

In this world, human beings are the only creatures who attack or engage in unilateral action against others without any proper reason. Human greed and revenge know no bounds. You may confine yourself to your own business, silently trying to progress, based on your own efforts. But still, you will not be safe, because others will grow jealous of you and will try to pull you down. Humans have unlimited desires that they want to fulfil. They also have an unlimited urge to see others get destroyed, and this gives them malicious pleasure.

Even the most harmful animal does not know how to

humiliate another creature. It does not know how to demean others in order to exalt itself and satisfy the urge to feel proud. It has no desire to unnecessarily get others into trouble and derive pleasure from this. It is only man who does this. God made man, the Quran (95: 4-5) says, in the 'the best of stature', but in his foolishness, man demeans himself in the lowliness of 'the lowest of the low'.

What God Wants from Us



An examination was being conducted in a college. A student entered the examination hall and took his seat. But he did not write anything at all in the answer sheet, though. He just sat in his chair, smoking cigarette after cigarette! And then, three hours later, he stepped out of the hall and went to the library, where he began answering the examination paper. He had left the answer sheet blank in the examination hall, but there, in the library, surrounded by books, he filled his notebook with his scribbling.

You will say this is a fictitious story. Surely, no student can be as stupid as to write his examination in the library instead of the examination hall, you will remark. And suppose this story is true, you will add, this student was definitely not in his senses.

It is true that only a mad man can behave like this. But something that appears so utterly absurd in the context of an examination of this sort is precisely what everyone is doing with regard to the Hereafter. A college student ought to write his examination in the examination hall, not in the library. In the same way, there are appropriate places to appear for the examination set by God. Strangely, though, people do not

appear for their examinations in those places which God has set for them for this purpose. Instead, they want to write their examinations elsewhere.

God wants to see evidence of a person's faith in its acceptance in the recesses of his heart, while people want to give evidence of it simply by verbal proclamations of the faith. God gauges our worship on the basis of the humility and sincerity of our prayers, while people think punctilious conformity to the minor details of external acts of worship to be proof of their piety. God wants to see the proof of their faith in terms of their inner being and their dealings, while people express it in the form of mere words. God wants us to follow His teachings in our lives, while people are busy stirring protests against others in the name of making them follow God's injunctions. God wants to see us help oppressed individuals, but people, instead, write, speak and issue statements about collective oppression, never helping oppressed individuals while presenting themselves to be ardent supporters of the oppressed as an abstract category.

Everyone knows that the answer sheet that a student fills up sitting in a library instead of an examination hall is utterly useless. Alas! If only people knew that, in exactly the same way, actions are completely valueless that are performed in any 'place' else other than where God wants them to be done!

Just Words, No Action



These days, paper is so common that wherever you look you will find at least one bit of it lying about. But these scraps of paper have no value. A currency note is also a bit of paper, but it has a definite value. Its value is so certain that no one can doubt it in the least. The difference between a currency

note and any ordinary piece of paper is that in the case of the latter, no one has undertaken a guarantee to honour it, while the former carries a guarantee from the Government's Bank. Every note has, printed on it, the promise that its bearer would be entitled to the full value that is printed on it. It is this guarantee that the Bank will honour the value of the note that provides value to the bit of paper that is the currency note.

The same is true for words. Today, we are surrounded by words all around us. But much of what we speak has no value at all. That is because these words are not accompanied by the guarantee of firm determination and sincerity. Someone promises to do some work for you, but when, at the appointed time, you ask him for help, he makes some excuse or the other, and in this way does not honour the value of his words. He had given you a bit of 'paper' in the form of a verbal promise, but when the time came, he was unwilling to engage in the action that was the true value of the words that formed his promise. His words were useless scraps of paper, and not a genuine bank-note.

People revel in the torrent of words that they let out, in the lofty promises that they make. But they are simply not willing to pay the practical price of their words, to honour their value. And so their utterances become just bits of scrap paper, like the waste paper that litters the streets, which people simply ignore.

Some people excel in passing resolution after resolution and issuing statement after statement in support of the oppressed, but when a single suffering person comes to their door asking for their help, they become as cold as an iceberg. How often it is that people's words are not matched by their intentions! How often it is that people say things that they don't really mean! How many people present themselves as models of decency and humility, but when their egos are bruised, they vent their jealousy and pride with a vengeance!

When Words Become Insufficient



John Brown was a truck driver in the north of England. He and his wife Leslie had no children, but they badly wanted one. And at just that time, science came to their help. A doctor in London combined a sperm from Mr. Brown and an egg from his wife in a special test-tube in his laboratory. In accordance with the Law of Nature, the sperm and the egg met. Four days later, the doctor placed the fertilized egg in Mrs. Brown's womb, where it began to grow. The experiment was successful, and in August 1978, the first 'test-tube baby' in history was born. She was named Louise Brown. The entire process was filmed, and after the baby was born, it was broadcast on television.

When asked to comment on the entire affair, John Brown simply remarked, 'Beautiful!' He just could not say anything other than just this one word!

Tragic events are sometimes much greater than occasions of great joy. Some years ago, I read about a woman whose two children had been brutally murdered in New Delhi and she could not utter a single word for seven hours after hearing the news.

The fact is that the more extreme the impact of an event, the less words one has to respond to it. If you are extremely happy, you do not have the words to express your feelings. Likewise, if you are extremely sad or terribly shocked and shaken, words will simply fail you. People who never cease expressing their sorrow over the state of religion, those who talk endlessly about the religion and the condition of the Muslim community today in the form of an endless barrage of words only prove that they are actually the least sorrowful as

far religion and Muslims are concerned. If they were truly so deeply sorrowful about the Muslims' conditions, they would have fallen silent, rather than engaging in a non-stop verbal duel.

The fact is that people have not discovered God as a Giver or an Avenger. Had they discovered Him in one of these two forms, they would not be continuing with their meaningless, never ending verbal outpourings.

Those Who Act for the Sake of the World



People generally seem to be very well-mannered. They give others gifts and invite them to their homes for a meal. They appear to be ever-willing to help others. They make other people's problems their own. They commiserate with people over their miseries and share in their joys. They forget their differences with others and desist from complaining.

People are happy that they are absolutely fine. They are just as they should be. Or so they think and want others to believe.

But whom do people deal with in a good way? They are good only to those with whom their perceived interests are linked, who they think they can benefit from, who they hope will help them when they need them. They are good to people whom they fear, people who have power and authority over them, or people who they fear losing because then they think they will have no one.

People's good manners are thus wholly benefit-based. They are good-mannered with those they think they can gain from. The reality of their 'good-manners' is exposed when they

deal with people other than those mentioned above, whose feelings they do not feel the need to consider in the same way. On such occasions, the very same person who a short while ago seemed the epitome of good manners turns out to be very ill-mannered. He does not bother to greet someone he feels he does not need to flatter or fear. He won't ever invite him to his home. He won't ever rush to his help. He won't think twice about losing his temper with him even for the slightest excuse. He doesn't feel the need to consider his feelings. The man who shows himself to be very well-mannered for the sake of his own worldly benefits exposes himself as foul-mannered in a situation where he does not see any worldly benefit for himself being involved.

Such 'good-manners' and 'humaneness' have no value whatsoever in God's eyes. No matter how much of these 'virtues' you possess, they will not save you from God's wrath. Only those actions have value that are undertaken to win God's pleasure and to secure one's salvation in the Hereafter. Actions that are performed in order to improve one's worldly fortunes will not be rewarded by God. God will say to such people that whatever they did was just for their worldly pleasure, that they have already received the recompense for those deeds in the world, and that in the Hereafter they will get nothing for them.

Earning Divine Reward



People whom God has blessed with money generally pay their employees and subordinate workers only the regular salary or payment. On the other hand, they very happily donate large amounts of money to conferences, relief funds and big institutions. If you ask them why they do this, they will reply,

‘What we pay our employees or workers is the payment for their work. We won’t get any divine reward for this payment. They have served us, and we have compensated them. What divine reward can we get from this? By paying them a salary, we’ve settled our matters with them. In contrast, the money that we donate to institutions and for community work will surely earn for us divine reward!’

But the reality of the matter is quite different actually. And this reply is simply an effort to conceal the real story. The fact of the matter is that deep inside his heart, every person nurses the desire that if he gives something to somebody, he should receive the reward for it in this very world. The poor man wants this recompense in the form of money. The rich man wants to be compensated in the form of social status. This is the hidden desire that often drives rich people to donate huge amounts to various noteworthy causes.

Obviously, a poor employee or worker does not have the financial capacity to make large donations. Unlike the rich, he does not have access to newspapers, who can report about him, on to the public stage, where he can garner publicity and fame. He does not have any fancy institution or a band of sycophants to welcome and cheer him. But when a rich man makes a donation to a famous institution or a laudable community project, he expects an impressive reward for it, in the form of being invited to preside over meetings, a prominent seat in public functions, a hearty welcome wherever he goes, a big boost in his social status, wide coverage in the media and a place among ‘the rich and the famous’.

Divine rewards for giving to others have to do with the intention behind the act of giving. Divine reward for giving is for that giving that is done only for God’s pleasure. Divine reward is for that giving that is done for the sake of God, in a low-profile way and away from limelight. It is for that giving that is informed by no factor other than earning God’s pleasure.

If you have already obtained the reward for giving in this

world itself, what more reward do you think you will get for it in the Hereafter?

What is Closeness to God?



Few people in this world have been able to find God in such a manner that it results in the thrilling experience that is called remembrance of God. False religiosity is touted about everywhere with much fanfare. But real piety is so rare as to be almost just a mere possibility.

Today, people talk much about God and religion, but there is hardly anyone who has found God in such a way that the awesomeness of the experience has shaken him to very roots, causing his hair to stand on end. Where is the person who, when he reads the Quran, cries out, 'O God! Your beneficence is so amazing! You have arranged for my guidance, otherwise I would have continued to flounder in darkness!' Where is the person who, when he learns about the practice of the Prophet, is struck with bewilderment at how God arranged for establishing the spotless model of the Prophet for us to follow and preserved it in history? Where is the person who, when he places his head on the earth in prostration, feels that God, in His mercy, has taken it in His protective arms? Where is the person who, when he eats something, experiences a wave of intense gratitude overwhelm his very being, being awestruck at the glory of God who has made such arrangements for our sustenance? Where is the person who, when he takes a sip of water, sheds tears and cries out, 'O God! If you do not quench my thirst, I shall remain thirsty! If you do not give me water, I will not be able to get it from anywhere!'

People assume they are very close to God, but they are actually far from Him. They take the name of God, but there's

no divine sweetness in their words. They claim to have found God, but in reality this is far from being the case. They create a big show in the name of God, but all this is simply useless. They imagine that God's Heaven is reserved for them, but no heavenly breeze brushes past them.

What piety and devotion to God is it if your proclaimed religiousness does not stir a thrill in your heart and mind, in your very being? What absurd heaven do you think has been reserved especially for you, whose admission ticket you think you carry around in your pocket while your behaviour shows no sign of you being a heavenly being? How strange are the denizens of your heaven who think that Paradise has been granted to them as their eternal inheritance, while all their interests and concerns are about this temporary world alone!

Fake Piety



Sometimes, it happens that a bit of mud accumulates on a boulder, and then, after a while a patch of green moss starts to grow on it. It looks like a little field, but if it rains heavily, the mud, and, along with it, the moss and other greenery, are all washed away, and the boulder becomes bare once again.

Exactly the same thing often happens with people. Externally, they seem absolutely fine. They appear to be very 'green'. But a single blow in the form of some occurrence completely destroys their 'greenery'. And then they become like bare, dry boulders.

While speaking to others, a person may give the impression of being the epitome of good manners and reasonableness, and of being an ardent advocate of justice and humanity. But when the time to act comes, he may behave in a totally contrary manner. Someone may demonstrate great

humility in the mosque while offering his prayers, but once he steps out of the mosque, he may show himself to be the very embodiment of pride and selfishness. Someone who insists that others be generous and respect people's rights may, when his time to act comes, show himself to be envious, malicious and cruel.

This world is for the purpose of testing us. Here, every person is being tested. But how often we fail! How often we forget the test that we are going through! How often we seek to provide proof of our truthfulness through our words, although what alone counts is evidence of our truthfulness through our actions! How often we show our good manners in good times, and how quickly we change our colours when the things go wrong! How often people are satisfied engaging in a show of modesty by performing some ritual actions before God, although true modesty lies in behaving modestly with the rest of God's creatures.

The field of moss that grows on a boulder is a deception. Such a field is of no use to the farmer. One strike of a flood is enough to prove it for what it truly is. Likewise, showy, phony piety is false and utterly useless. The 'flood' of the Hereafter will prove that those who cling on to it for support have actually no support to lean on.

Heed the Words of the Caller to Truth



The Bible quotes Jesus Christ as providing a wonderful parable about a person who calls others toward God, and those to whom he calls:

“To what shall I compare this generation? They are like

children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others, 'We played the flute for you, and you didn't dance. We sang a funeral song, and you didn't mourn.'" (Matthew 11:16-17)

The caller to truth swims in God's ocean, and so he is able to sing God's song, to strum God's eternal melody on the musical instrument that is Nature. In that melody, there are flashes of God's beauty and perfection. The one who listens to it falls into a dance. But the melody also warns us that God is watching us, and that we will be answerable to Him for all our actions. It causes the sensitive person to quake and burst into tears.

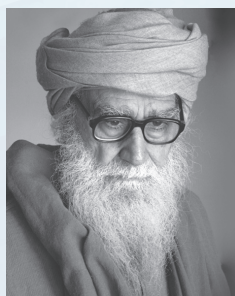
The caller to truth is an expression of God's beauty and majesty. But man is so negligent that he does not learn anything from this at all. He does not let it affect him. In the words of the caller to truth, God comes very close to man, but even at that moment he does not find God. Man is not driven into a state of being overwhelmed, into bursting into song in praise of God. Nor do his eyes moisten with the fear of God. Even if he cares to hear the most sensitive message, it as if he is a rock, refusing to use his God-given mind to deeply ponder on such matters or to let his heart be stirred by them.

Someone who calls people to God is not like a record that plays on a music machine. He stirs such an upheaval in the soul whose intensity is more than a volcano. When the caller to God speaks, he expresses his innermost self. When he writes something, it is with the ink of his own blood. His songs are the sound of a divine earthquake that convulses the human soul. But it is perhaps the strangest thing in the world that even such divine words have no effect on people.

The caller to truth openly warns man of the coming Day of Judgment. Yet, man chooses to remain blind and deaf. The caller to truth opens the windows of Heaven, as it were, to man, but, still, man does not break into a dance. The caller to truth shows him images of the leaping fires of Hell, but yet man does not burst into tears. Even if God were to stand in front of Him, man does not prostrate before Him.

God did not make a more delicate creature than man. Yet, no one gives more proof of insensitivity than him.

We human beings have a natural yearning to seek our Creator. In the lives we lead, the race toward materialism conceals this longing hidden deep within us. In time, the desire becomes so intense that even after having acquired the luxuries of the world, one ceases to find meaning in them and seeks to know what is beyond all that is apparent. In this book, the author focuses on directing the reader to the Creator by bringing to attention how ordinary, usual events can lead to profound realizations about God. The words of the book, full of spiritual meaning, make the reader feel as if he were gliding through the vast cosmos, beholding God's creation, and thus have the experience of nearness to God.



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan is an Islamic scholar, spiritual leader and peace activist. He is the founder of Centre for Peace and Spirituality and has been internationally recognized for his contributions to world peace. The Maulana has authored over 200 books dealing with Islam's spiritual wisdom, the Prophet's nonviolent 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.

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ISBN 978-93-89766-24-0



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