

THE BOOK OF LIFE

*Guiding Principles for
Successful Living*



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

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Successful Living*

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CONTENTS

Preface	7	All To The Mind	32
Chapter One		The Cause Within	33
PAGES OF WISDOM		One's Own Mistake	34
The Mature Person	10	Increase Through Saving	35
Superior Solutions	11	Victory Without War	37
The Power of Creativity	12	A Word of Wisdom	38
Sheer Hard Work	13	A Simple Principle	39
Purposefulness	14	No Danger	40
Walk Carefully	16	Courage Without Caution	42
The Wise Approach	17	Conventional Thinking	43
Developing Insight	18	The Condition For Success	44
The Way to Succeed	20	The Journey of Life	46
A Piece of Advice	21	Learning From The Enemy	47
The Question About Cost	22	Closed Mind	48
Failure and Success	24	Rising Higher	49
Business Consistency	25	Lack of Wisdom	51
Action, Not Reaction	26	Accepting Reality	52
Do Not Provoke Anger	28	The Secret of Success	53
Between Choice		Who is Guilty?	54
And Constraint	29	Ease in Difficulty	56
One's Weakness	30		

CONTENTS

Shopkeeping	57	Against the Times	88
Present-Day Society	58	Truly Alive or Spiritually Dead	89
In A Dream	59	A Suicide	91
A Successful Journey	61	The Secret of Life	92
Possible and Impossible	62	Human Greatness	93
Opportunities of Every Kind	63	The Lesson of the Owl	95
Despite Disability	65	Even After Losing	96
The Secret of Success	66	Underestimating Others	97
What A Difference	67	Focus of Mind	98
The Importance of Purpose	68	Nature's Judgment	99
Wrong Way Round	69	Great Progress	100
Justice is Alive	70	Ticket to Success	101
Not Destruction	72	Discovery	103
Words or Reality	73	The Miracle of Service	104
A Greater Danger	75	Shaping The Mind	105
After The Time	76	An Unavoidable Reality	106
Churchill's Tribute	77	A Lesson From Nature	107
How Difficult, How Easy	78	The Journey of Life	108
Acknowledgement	80	Imaginary Fear	109
Resilience	81	An Example	111
Against Oneself	82	The Outcome of Anger	112
High Thinking	83	What Is The Cause?	113
Necessary Preparation	84	A Step Beyond The Job	114
Commercial Success	85	A Sabotage Plan	116
A Simple Solution	87		

CONTENTS

The Big Story	117	Chapter Two	
The Spirit of Reform	118	INSIGHTS OF THE WISE	
Better Governance	120	The Difference In Thinking	152
Correct Advice	121	Think Solution, Not Complaint	154
Great Vision	122	Another Opportunity	157
Why The Difference	123	Ticket to Success	160
Action and Result	125	A Spoonful of Sugar	162
War and Peace	126	Looking to the Future	165
One Event, Two Outcomes	127	Twenty Years Later	167
The Need To Pay The Price	128	Challenge, Not Oppression	170
The Power of Construction	129	Extraordinary People	172
Two Kinds of Leaders	131	The Importance of Time	175
Living Nation, Dead Nation	132	The Tiger's Way	178
Towards Nature	133	Water Instead of Blood	180
The Way of Wisdom	134	An Easy Solution	183
The Fruit of Morality	135	The Importance of Knowledge	186
The Wonder of Hard Work	136	After Deprivation	188
Wisdom	138	Avoid Provocation	191
The No-Problem Person	139	A Friend Within The Enemy	194
The Only Path	141	Success Through Failure	196
Obstacles Are Steps	142	Maintain Distance	198
An Incident	143	The Courage to Face Challenges	201
An Easy Method	145	The Power of Conscience	203
The Secret of Life	146		
A Word of Wisdom	148		
What Purpose Demands	149		

CONTENTS

Applying The Brain	206	Chapter Three	
The Lesson of History	208	ARTICLES OF WISDOM	
The Power of Unity	211	The Mind	
A Natural Shield	213	A Treasure of Power	246
Awareness of Purpose	215	Opportunities Never End	249
Misunderstanding	217	The Miracle of Service	251
The Power of Usefulness	220	Tolerance: The Way of Nature	255
A Sure Solution	222	A Misunderstanding	258
Victory Without War	224	Boundless Possibilities	261
Prudence in Spending	226	A Model Minority	264
Do Not Be Wasteful	227	Solution-Oriented Policy	272
A Message of Hope	228	This is Not Islam	282
The Secret of Success	231	Realism Wins	284
From Experience	233	A Comparison	289
A Lesson	236	Outstanding Achievement	293
The Art of Patience	238	Patience Wins Hearts	296
The Wisdom of Seizing Opportunities	241	The Power of Constructive Work	300
The Principle of Life	243	The Secret of Life	303

PREFACE

Besides human beings, the entire universe operates according to well-established laws. Every element of creation follows a specific order and never deviates from it. By adhering to this order, each thing in the universe attains its stage of perfection.

In the same way, there is also a law set by nature for human life. The person who follows this law succeeds in this world. The one who ignores it ends up failing and disappointed.

The basic principle of this law is that the system of human life is built on competition. Here, every person must consider others. Each individual has to contend with others in order to secure their rightful share.

This principle means that whenever a person or a nation gains something in this world, it is because of their own ability. And whenever they lose something, it is because of their own shortcomings. Therefore, if any group is left behind in the race of life, it should not complain about others but should instead look within itself to find the cause of its loss.

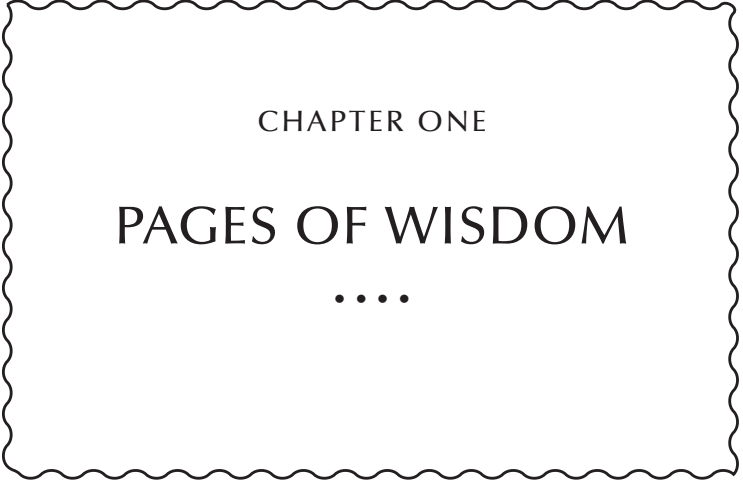
This compilation presents the same law of nature explained from various perspectives. It has been arranged in a simple

order, based on length: first, one-page essays; then, two-page essays; and after that, longer essays. Accordingly, it has been divided into three sections—Pages of Wisdom, Insights of The Wise, And Essays of Wisdom.

Wahidudddin Khan,

New Delhi

March 19, 1992



CHAPTER ONE

PAGES OF WISDOM

...

THE MATURE PERSON

In an article on maturity, Anne Landers writes: Maturity is the ability to control anger, and settle differences without violence or destruction. Maturity is patience, the willingness to give up immediate pleasure in favour of the long-term gain. Maturity is perseverance, sweating out a project despite setbacks. Maturity is Unselfishness, responding to the needs of others. Maturity is the capacity to face unpleasantness and disappointment without becoming bitter. Maturity is humility. A mature person is able to say, "I was wrong." And when he is proved right, he does not have to say, "I told you so." Maturity means dependability, integrity, keeping one's word. Maturity is the ability to live in peace with things we cannot change.

That is to say that the truly mature person is one who cannot only bear with unpleasantness, but who can rise above negative reaction in situations of severe adversity; who can keep his emotions firmly under control, who, in the last analysis, is a man of iron character.

Maturity stands at the apex of human virtues. One who has this quality has reached the high point of humanity: he is the perfect man. It is such individuals who are the true achievers in life; who will carry their nation forward to success.

SUPERIOR SOLUTIONS

Thinking is an incomprehensibly strange art of our world. A number of books have appeared on this subject which as well as adding to human knowledge, have increased our sense of wonder.

Here are the titles of some of these books:

Towards a Theory of Thinking, Dr. Rapaport, (1951)

The Psychology of Thinking, W.E. Vinacke, (1952)

Thinking, F.C. Bartlett, (1958)

Productive Thinking, Max Wertheimer (1959)

The research on which these books are based has brought to light much new information on the working of the brain. One fact which has emerged is that a very important process takes place within the human mind which the psychologist call 'brain-storming'.

A process called brainstorming has been offered as a method of facilitating the production of new solutions to problems...These unrestricted suggestions increase the probability that at least some superior solutions will emerge. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 19, p.357)

Researchers tell us that when a human being is facing a crisis situation, latent capabilities are aroused which enable him to engage in this process of brainstorming. This in turn enables him to discover a superior solution to

the problem facing him. Success then follows as surely as night follows day.

This is one of God's great mysteries—how he has made our difficulties the ladders to our success.

THE POWER OF CREATIVITY

A university professor was once asked, “In your opinion, what is the mark of an educated person?” The professor replied, “It is the person who can create something out of nothing.” This definition is indeed very true. Without doubt, the greatest mark of an educated and aware person is the ability to discover something new. In situations that appear empty, they are able to bring something into existence. This quality applies to every field of life—whether it is knowledge, business, social matters, or national affairs. In short, in every area of life, the person who can prove this human ability is the one who can achieve real success.

In this world, a person must move from ordinary knowledge to the discovery of higher wisdom. They must find the positive side within unfavourable conditions. They must discover a friend even among enemies. They must make a journey of success through the storm of failures. They must show that from the ruins of life, they can build a new and magnificent palace. Those who demonstrate this creative ability are the ones truly deserving to be called human.

Those who cannot show it are, in reality, like animals—even if outwardly they wear the clothing of human beings.

This creativity is the greatest asset of any individual or nation. It is what gives them a high position in today's world. Those who lose the ability to create cannot find their place here by any other means. No matter how much noise they make, no matter if their cries and protests echo through the heavens and the earth, they may stir up the sound of loudspeakers—but they will never be able to build the silent fortress of strength.

SHEER HARD WORK

Ms. Bapsi Sidhwa, a Parsi lady from Pakistan, is at present teaching at the University of Houston, Texas, in America. Her novels, written in English, are published by international publishing concerns.

The amazing thing is that Bapsi Sidhwa had no formal education. A polio victim at an early age, she was removed by her parents from the primary school she was attending in Lahore. For some time, she studied with the help of a tutor, but this was only for a very short period.

It was only her keenness, which spurred her on to become proficient in her studies. She started to study books in English on her own, becoming, as she put it herself, a voracious reader. Ultimately, by dint of continuous effort,

she was able to write in English. She submitted her work to various magazines, but got no response from them except rejection slips. The manuscript of her first book lay on her bookshelf for eight long years. She was reduced to a state of despair.

Finally, events took a turn for the better and her articles started to be welcomed by foreign magazines. Despite having no formal degree, she has become known at the international level as a writer in English, and teaches the subject of creative writing at an American University (*The Times of India*, February 25, 1990).

All learning is acquired in the school of hard work; all progress is achieved at the price of unflagging effort. Perseverance is a virtue which can be practised at all times, even by one who is crippled by disease, and even by one who has failed to obtain a university degree. Hard work, in fact, is the brightest jewel in the crown of human virtues.

PURPOSEFULNESS

In Delhi, there was a young Muslim man who grew up in poverty. He never had the chance for formal education, but he was strong and capable. As he got older, he felt there was no respectable work open to him. Eventually, he drifted into a life of thuggery. Fighting, quarrels, and looting became his trade, and people began to call him a gangster.

A few years later, someone was moved to help him and lent him some money to start a shop. Once he began working there and saw a profit, he discovered purpose, so all his attention shifted to his business. He left his gangster life behind and became fully absorbed in running his shop.

A similar pattern can be observed among today's Muslims. They have lost their sense of purpose and, in the modern world, have become a directionless community. As a result, negativity has taken hold. They have turned into a people of complaints and protests, quick to react over minor issues. Every gathering becomes a forum for grievances, and every public assembly turns into a protest.

The only solution is to re-establish Muslims as a purpose-driven community. And that purpose can only be one: conveying the message of faith to others. If Muslims adopt this mission, their weaknesses will fade on their own.

They will discover a higher and constructive purpose in life. Their sense of aimlessness will naturally turn into a sense of direction. Over time, they will develop strength of character together with patience and tolerance. Instead of harbouring hatred toward others, they will learn to love them. In the end, they will attain a vision that perceives light even in darkness and reveals the secret of gain within loss.

Purpose is the foundation of all reform. An aimless mind becomes a breeding ground for evil. Give a person a true purpose, and everything else in their life will begin to fall into place.

WALK CAREFULLY

There is a path covered with thorny bushes. A man carelessly walks into it. The thorns prick his body, his clothes get torn, and he is delayed in reaching his destination. His peace of mind is disturbed.

Now, what will this man do? Will he hold a conference against thorns? Will he issue fiery statements about them? Will he demand that the United Nations remove all thorns from every tree in the world so no traveler ever faces this problem again?

No serious or sensible person would ever do that. Instead, he will admit his own mistake. He will say to himself: "When God gave you two eyes, why didn't you use them to avoid the thorns? You could have held your clothes close and walked carefully past the thorny path. That way your body would have been safe, and you would have reached your destination without delay.

God placed this example in the world of trees so that people might learn from it while journeying through human life. But it seems no one has read this sign of God. No one has heard this message or taken its lesson. Today, you will find countless people who walk carelessly among the thorns of human society. And when those thorns hurt them, they immediately start blaming the thorns instead of pausing to think. They make the useless attempt of placing the blame for their own mistakes on others.

Everyone should understand that just as thorny bushes cannot be removed from the world of trees, thorny people will also never be removed from human society—until the Day of Judgment. The key to living safely and successfully in this world is to walk carefully and avoid such people. Every other approach only increases destruction, nothing else.

THE WISE APPROACH

In life, a person often has to decide what to do and what not to do. At such times, there are two possible standards for decision-making:

1. What is right.
2. What is possible.

The wise approach is this: in personal matters, a person should focus on what is right, and follow the path that is correct. But in social or collective matters, the right approach is to look at what is possible, and adopt what can realistically be done.

The reason for this difference is simple. In personal matters, the issue concerns only you. You have complete control over yourself. You can shape your own direction and deal with yourself however you choose. That is why in personal matters, you should set the highest standards and, as far as possible, follow the path required by religion and morality.

But in social matters, another party is involved. Over them, you have no control. You can speak to them, but you cannot force them to act. In such cases, wisdom requires that you focus on what is possible. Out of the two options, accept the one that can actually work.

In personal matters, following what is right does not stop the journey of life—it goes on. But in social matters, insisting only on what is right quickly brings opposition from others, blocking your way. The journey comes to a halt, and all energy is wasted on conflict. That is why the useful and productive way is to accept what is possible, accommodate the demands of the other party, keep moving forward in the present, and leave the future to unfold in its own time.

This is the wise way to live in this world.

DEVELOPING INSIGHT

U ntil the Second World War, the United States was the world's largest producer and seller of motor cars. The prestige of the Rolls-Royce dominated people's minds. After the war, the era of Germany's Volkswagen began. By 1970, more than sixteen million Volkswagen cars had been sold in 140 countries. But as of 1992, when this was written, it is the age of Japanese cars. Today, Toyota—not General Motors—leads the global automobile industry.

On American roads, about thirty-five percent of all cars are made in Japan.

Today, 80 percent of the electronic goods used worldwide come from Japan. When America's Apollo 2 went to the moon, it needed a very small tape recorder (cassette recorder) to be placed inside. Only Japan could provide such a tiny and reliable recorder. And so, Apollo 2 carried a Japanese-made recorder to the moon.

Before the Second World War, the label "Made in Japan" meant that the product was cheap and unreliable. Japanese goods had such a poor image that Western merchants considered it beneath their dignity to stock them. Yet within only 40 years, Japan achieved revolutionary progress. According to American scholar William Ouchi, the secret lies in motivating their employees.

The Japanese set up an exceptionally high standard of primary education. They gave elementary teachers high salaries and the same respect as university professors, bringing the most capable people into the education and training of their young generation. They also instilled in their people a deep awareness that the essence of industry is quality. In modern Japan, quality control circles are found everywhere. By 1980, one hundred thousand registered circles were in operation. It is also said that about one million unregistered quality circles exist in Japan.

THE WAY TO SUCCEED

In February 1992, a book fair was held in Delhi. On February 7, I went there as well. While visiting different stalls, I came across one that immediately caught my attention. Its signboard read: *Think Incorporated*. This was a unique stall at the fair. Its aim was to teach people the art of thinking, because wrong thinking leads a person to failure, while right thinking leads to success.

Here I found a beautifully printed English book by Mr. Promod Kumar Batra titled *Management Thoughts*. The book had 315 pages and contained 1,360 useful quotations. One example was this saying:

“Our attitude determines our altitude.”

At this stall, there were several thought-provoking posters. One showed a matchstick. Underneath it was written: A matchstick has a head but no brain. That is why, whenever it is struck, it immediately catches fire. Let us learn from this simple matchstick. We have heads—and we also have brains. Therefore, we should not flare up at every provocation.

A matchstick has a head, but it does not have a brain. Therefore, whenever there is friction, it flares up immediately. Let us learn from this humble matchstick. You and I have heads as well as brains. Therefore, let us not react to impulse.

One type of person is the one who explodes at the slightest provocation. He acts under the force of emotion, and such a person always fails. Another type of person does not flare up, even when provoked. He thinks calmly first, then acts. Such a person always succeeds. The second type is truly human, while the first is only like a matchstick.

A PIECE OF ADVICE

Benjamin Franklin, the American thinker, was born in 1706 and died in 1790. One of his sayings is:

“Keep your eyes open before marriage, half shut afterwards.”

This means that before marriage, one should gather full knowledge about a partner. But after marriage, one should be content and avoid focusing on every detail. Someone expressed the same idea more simply: test before marriage, adjust afterwards.

No man or woman is perfect. Nobody is flawless or ideal. That is why, before marriage, careful inquiry is necessary. But after marriage, one should focus on the good qualities of a spouse and overlook the shortcomings.

Absolute perfection is not possible in this world. Moreover, what one person considers ideal may not be the same for

the other. For this reason, no matter how sincere or correct a person may be, they can never completely satisfy their partner. Each side will always notice some weaknesses in the other.

One option is to fight over these flaws and end the relationship. But the problem is that in any new relationship, sooner or later, another flaw will appear. Even if a second or third marriage is made, the same issues will arise. In such circumstances, the practical way forward is adjustment. Every man and woman has both strengths and weaknesses. The wise approach is to value the strengths and tolerate the weaknesses. In practice, this is the only workable method. No other way is possible in this world.

THE QUESTION ABOUT COST

Maulana Farid al-Wahidi, who lives in Jeddah, shared a very meaningful saying in a meeting on November 1, 1991. He said:

“One who wants to conquer Mount Everest never counts the cost of his shoes.”

If your goal is small, you can achieve it with little effort. But if you set a big goal, you must also realize that a big goal demands a big price. A person who wants to achieve

something great must be ready to pay that price. Great success is not anyone's monopoly. Every person has the potential to achieve it. Yet we see that very few people achieve it. The reason is that they are not prepared to pay the price. In the market, you get little for a small price and much for a high price. This is also the law of life. In one sentence, the rule of life is: you get exactly as much as you give—neither less nor more.

Paying the price does not mean fighting or shedding blood. Nor is it only about money. The real price is psychological. The highest cost in this world is what you pay on the level of the mind. This means bearing discomfort, staying calm despite provocation, not responding to people's bad behaviour with rudeness, keeping up courage in times of despair, holding on to hope even in loss, and seeing a ray of light in the darkest situations.

The greatest sacrifice is when anger and the fire of revenge burn within a person, yet he extinguishes them in his own heart. It is when a person suffers hurt from someone but does not think ill of them. It is when one faces negative situations yet remains firm in positive thinking. To rise above circumstances, instead of being trapped within them—that is the real price of success.

FAILURE AND SUCCESS

The secret of America's progress lies in a single word: research. In the United States, everything is studied and analyzed. For example, many people have researched the meaning of success and failure, and how failure can be turned back into success. Some books written on this subject include:

- Carole Hyatt, *When Smart People Fail*
- Rabbi Harold Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*
- Charles Garfield, *Peak Performers: The New Heroes of American Business*
- Harvey Mackay, *Swim with the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive*

These books contain valuable insights into their topic. Here, we will mention only two points.

The first point is that in this world, it is impossible for anyone to live a life completely free of failure. At some point, everyone must face setbacks. The right approach is to treat each failure as a lesson. The secret behind the success of many well-known people is that when they failed, they refused to see failure as the final word:

They learnt not to take failure as the last word.

The second point is that success, like failure, can also be a problem. Continuous success often breeds arrogance, which itself becomes a serious cause of failure. A successful businessman, Glenn Early, once said:

“I can’t afford to get arrogant about success. So, I am always trying to improve my business.”

Success and failure are not mysterious. They are outcomes that arise from identifiable causes. Once you understand these causes, you will have no reason to complain about others.

BUSINESS CONSISTENCY

W ealthier people often prefer light, cereal-based foods for breakfast or with tea. One example of this is cornflakes. Many varieties of cornflakes are available in the market. Several companies have produced them under different brand names and created various flavours. But in India, most of these attempts have not been very successful, despite heavy spending on advertising.

Currently, only two companies dominate the cornflakes market in India: Hindustan Vegetables Oils Corporation (HVOC) and Mohan Meakin Ltd. Together, they sell about one thousand tons of cornflakes every year, worth 35 million rupees. Interestingly, these companies do not spend anything at all on advertising. Their products sell without it. (*The Times of India*, June 9, 1990).

What explains this difference? The main reason is that the other companies had no history. They introduced one variety of cornflakes under a brand name, but when it failed, they quickly replaced it with another or abandoned the product altogether to try something else. In contrast, the two successful companies mentioned above have a 20-year history behind their product. For two decades, they have consistently produced the same type of cornflakes. This long history has made their product familiar and trusted in the eyes of the public. When someone wants cornflakes, the brand name is already in their mind, and they go to the market and buy what they know.

This is the true secret of business success. Consistency is an essential condition in business. If you keep starting and abandoning ventures, you will never succeed. But if you start a business and remain steadfast—refusing to quit despite difficulties—then after “20 years,” you will inevitably reach the next stage of success.

ACTION, NOT REACTION

The American company IBM was so advanced in the field of computers that it was called a “computer giant.” A few years ago, its executives mocked Japanese computer manufacturers by saying:

“When IBM sneezes, Japanese computer makers are blown away.” (*Time*, September 17, 1990)

If in India a Hindu were to make such a remark against Muslims, all the superficial leaders and third-rate newspapers of the Muslims would immediately protest, claiming that Muslim sentiments had been hurt and that the “administration” had failed in its duty. The Muslim public, provoked by this “incitement,” would become ready for confrontation. This would lead to communal riots, after which the Muslims of the country would fall even further behind.

But Japanese industrialists did not show anger at this “provocation.” Instead, they focused entirely on improving the quality of their computers. As a result, according to *Time* (September 17, 1990), Japan moved ahead of the whole world in the computer industry. Today, Japan is in such a position that the Japanese company Fujitsu announced its newest and largest computers could carry out 600 million instructions per second, while the best IBM computer could manage only 210 million instructions per second:

“Fujitsu said its largest new computer can perform up to 600 million instructions per second, compared with as many as 210 MIPS for IBM’s best.” (p. 47)

To flare up at provocation is called reaction. To ignore provocation and instead focus on building and strengthening oneself is called action. The law of life is that those who

engage in “action” move forward, while those who remain caught in “reaction” end up destroyed.

DO NOT PROVOKE ANGER

On May 29, 1990, Delhi newspapers carried a sobering story. A man named Anant Ram, 35 years old, lived in the slums of Sudarshan Park (Moti Nagar). He was addicted to alcohol. Without money for liquor, he asked his wife for cash. She refused. An argument followed between husband and wife. Then, in the words of *The Times of India* (May 29, 1990):

“The accused, a habitual drunkard, was enraged when his wife refused to give him money he asked for. Giving way to his tantrums, he dashed his son against the floor, thus killing him then and there.”

The accused, an alcoholic, lost control when his wife refused to give him the money he wanted. In his rage, he picked up his two-year-old son (Arjun) and threw him to the ground several times. As a result, the child died instantly.

When a person is in anger, at that moment he is under the control of the devil. In such a state, he can commit any inhuman act—even the merciless killing of his own child.

This is a weakness present in every human being. In such

situations, the only way to live safely and successfully in society is to avoid provoking others to anger. With tact and good sense, one should try not to push others into that emotional state where they become tools of the devil and resort to mad acts like the one in this story.

The evils of anger and revenge are not limited to any one community. They are found in human nature everywhere, regardless of the nation or country to which a person belongs. Anger and revenge should be treated as human problems, not as issues of race or religion.

BETWEEN CHOICE AND CONSTRAINT

The famous scientist Albert Einstein explained a principle of the physical world in these words:

“Energy can neither be created nor destroyed.”

This fact is evidence of the Creator’s absolute power. Human beings can only use the world as it exists. They cannot change it or wipe it out. From this we learn what a person’s true position in this world is. A human being is not the owner here—only a subject. In religious terms, this situation is called a test. A person comes into this world for a limited time to complete the paper of his test. After that, he must leave. Beyond this, he has no control at all.

Some people, discouraged by the conditions of life, commit suicide. They believe they are ending or destroying themselves. But this is not possible. Just as the energy of the world, which appears in the form of matter, cannot be erased, the energy that takes shape as a human being also cannot be erased. A person can choose to commit suicide, but he cannot bring about nonexistence. This fact symbolically shows the true position and limitations of human beings in this world.

A person can deny reality, but he cannot change it. He can rebel, but he cannot escape the results of rebellion. He can reject moral discipline, but he cannot remove the need for morality from the universe. He can do whatever he wants, but he cannot turn his own wishes into the final standard by which all human beings will ultimately be judged. A person is free in this world—but his freedom is limited, not unlimited.

ONE'S WEAKNESS

Robert Emmiyan (b. 1965) is a well-known athlete who represented the USSR and Armenia. He is regarded as the top long-jumper. He was born on February 15, 1965, and earned extraordinary fame by winning gold medals in international competitions.

An Indian journalist, Mr. V. Krishnaswamy, conducted a

detailed interview with Robert Emmiyan. It was published in *The Times of India* on April 5, 1988. Mr. Krishnaswamy asked the Russian champion: when you take part in international competitions, what do you do to achieve success? Robert Emmiyan replied:

“The most important thing is to get rid of the defects which prevent me from improving my performance. My coach and I know that I have reserves which we must put to use.”

In other words, he emphasized that his key priority was to eliminate the weaknesses that hindered his progress, noting that both he and his coach recognized the untapped potential that needed to be fully utilized.

The secret of success that Robert Emmiyan described for sports is the same secret of success in life. Whenever a person fails in the competition of life, he fails because of his own weaknesses. Knowing his internal weaknesses and overcoming them and entering the field of action with better preparation, this is the only secret of success in this world. In the present world, whoever succeeds does so by fulfilling this condition and whoever is unsuccessful is unsuccessful because he proved to be deficient in fulfilling this condition. The unsuccessful is the one who fails to make full use of his abilities, and the successful is the one who proves to be successful by making full use of his abilities.

ALL TO THE MIND

Professor Paul Dirac (1902–1984) died in Florida at the age of 82. After Newton and Einstein, he is considered one of the greatest scientists of the modern age. He received the Nobel Prize as well as many other honours.

Dirac is most closely associated with quantum mechanics, the theory that explores the tiniest particles inside the atom. He was the first to predict the existence of antimatter, a prediction later confirmed by further research. On November 4, 1984, *The Guardian* published an article about Dirac with the headline:

Prophet of the Anti-Universe

Dirac discovered the first antiparticle inside the atom, called the positron. This discovery brought a revolution to nuclear physics. Dirac explained that he would often lie on the floor of his study with his feet elevated, letting blood flow to his head, as a way of thinking through his ideas on subatomic matter, in the writer's words:

“When people asked him how he got his startling ideas about the nature of sub-atomic matter, he would patiently explain that he did so lying on his study floor with his feet up so that the blood ran to his head.”

At first this sounds like a joke. But in truth, any major intellectual achievement is only possible for the person

who channels all the energy of the body into the mind. Most people scatter their strength in many directions; they fail to focus themselves on one goal. That is why they live incomplete lives and leave this world without real accomplishment. Every task demands a person's full strength. The one who achieves great success is the one who devotes all of it to a single purpose.

THE CAUSE WITHIN

Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968) once said: “A man can’t ride your back unless it’s bent.”

This saying, in simple symbolic language, expresses a truth about life. If you are standing straight, no one can jump onto your back. A person can only do that if your back is bent. Riding is possible on a bent back, not on a straight one. Life works the same way: defeat in this world is really the price of one's own weakness. Someone gains control over you only when you give them the chance by becoming weak. That is why reason and realism demand that whenever you see someone gaining power over you, your first step should be to look within and remove the weakness that gave them the opportunity.

In the life of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), during the battle of Uhud, the Muslims at first were winning. But their victory later turned into defeat. The reason was the mistake of a group among the Muslims themselves. When

the Quran commented on this event, it said nothing about the injustice or aggression of the other side. In its comment (3:152), the entire warning was directed only at the Muslims, so that they would become deeply aware of their own shortcomings. By correcting these shortcomings, they could ensure that in the future no one would be able to take advantage of them and defeat them. Whenever someone is defeated by another, it happens because of his own weakness. Identify your weakness, overcome it, and you will have no cause for complaint or protest against anyone.

ONE'S OWN MISTAKE

Iknew a man who was very healthy. God had blessed him with a good mind. Yet he never succeeded in life. Whatever work he began always ended in failure. In the end, he lost his mental balance. One day, in that state, he met with an accident when a jeep collided with him, and he died as a result of the accident.

The simple reason for his failure was that he never used his abilities in the right direction. He always blamed others for his setbacks. But the truth is, apart from himself, there was no one who could really be held responsible for his failures.

He enrolled in a school for his education. But before he could complete matriculation, he became interested in

politics. As a result, he failed his tenth-grade exam, and his studies could not continue further. He opened a shop, but he kept no fixed schedule. He would open and close it whenever he liked. The result was that the shop eventually closed down. He also took up a job, but he considered it below his supposed standard. He remained constantly irritated and often quarreled with his employer. Finally, the employer, fed up with him, dismissed him. So, it went. In this way, he kept trying different things, and every effort ended without success. He was always complaining about others—this person is prejudiced, that person acted out of hostility, another does not want to see me succeed. Thus, he kept putting the blame for his failures on others. He spent his whole life trying to prove others wrong, but in the end, the result was that he himself was proved wrong. Blaming others for one's own ruin may feel satisfying for a moment, but the price is heavy. As a result, a person's downfall continues endlessly, and in this world of cause and effect, it never truly ends.

INCREASE THROUGH SAVING

Some materials allow electric current to pass through them. These are called conductors. Copper, iron, and aluminum are examples of such conductors. Wires made from these materials are used to transmit electricity from power plants to other places.

But during transmission, these materials heat up and resist the flow of electricity. As a result, about half of the electricity is wasted. In other words, of all the electricity generated in a power plant, only half is actually used, while the other half is lost.

In 1911, Dutch scientist Heike Kamerlingh Onnes (1853–1926) discovered that certain materials, at a specific temperature, reach the point of absolute zero. At that stage, they completely lose their resistance and can transmit electricity without any obstruction. Such materials are called superconductors, and the phenomenon is called superconductivity. Research began on this, and after nearly 80 years, it has reached its final stage. It is now possible to use superconductors for electricity transmission, which means that 100 percent of the generated electricity can be used. In other words, usable electricity can be doubled without building more power plants. This new discovery has made an old saying into reality:

Electricity saved is electricity generated.

This is one example that shows saving is also a kind of income. If you cannot increase your earnings, then reduce your spending. By cutting expenses, you can increase your effective income. This way of adding to income is something every person can put into practice.

VICTORY WITHOUT WAR

The American weekly *Time* (July 4, 1988) published a cover story on Japan. Its telling title was:

Super Japan: Can an economic giant become a global power?

In 1945, America celebrated victory over Japan. Today, that same defeated Japan is gaining victory over America. At first, this victory was only economic, but now it is spreading into other fields as well. America is currently the world's largest debtor nation, with \$400 billion in foreign debt. By contrast, Japan is the world's largest creditor nation, having lent \$240 billion to the world.

These days in America, many books and articles are appearing that argue America is moving quickly toward decline, while Japan is rising rapidly. One such book is:

The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers by Professor Paul Kennedy, 1987.

After reading that issue of *Time*, many readers wrote letters to the magazine. Some of these letters were published in the following issue: (July 25, 1988). One letter, written by Brian Mirsky of Princeton, stated simply: "your article on Japan's economic success makes it clear that although the U.S. won the war, Japan won the peace".

Japan's story shows just how wide the range of possibilities is in God's world. Here, the defeated can rise above the victor—without fighting a war, without ever directly clashing with the conqueror.

A WORD OF WISDOM

The well-known industrialist G. D. Birla (1894-1983) was deeply involved in India's freedom movement. He donated more than ten million rupees to the Indian National Congress and was one of Mahatma Gandhi's close associates. Before 1947, Birla House in Delhi had become a permanent gathering place for Congress leaders.

On August 15, 1947, at 10:30 a.m., the Viceroy was scheduled to deliver his final official speech announcing India's independence. All the leading Congress figures sat in Birla House, watching the clock, waiting to hear his words on the radio. G. D. Birla was among them. Birla had a strict habit of going to bed at exactly 8 p.m. When the clock struck eight, he stood up from the gathering. He said, "It's my bedtime now. I'll read the Viceroy's speech in tomorrow's newspaper."

This is the right way to live a successful life. A person must learn to tell the difference between a "problem" and a "purpose." Pay attention to problems only as long as they do not interfere with your purpose. Once a problem comes into conflict with your purpose, hand it over to circumstances and keep moving toward your goal. Most people stay trapped in their problems. As a result, they lose peace of mind. They cannot give their time to higher aims. In the end, they die burdened with frustration. But that

is not wisdom. Use your energy to deal with problems, but set a limit. Once that limit is reached, let go of the problem and hold firmly to your purpose.

The truth is that in solving problems, the decisive factor is not our worry, but circumstances. No matter how much a person frets, in the end, events unfold according to what circumstances demand. The wisest approach is to give problems thought up to a point and then leave them to circumstances — Pay attention until the clock strikes “eight.” After that, hand the problem over to circumstances and go to sleep. Then accept whatever outcome circumstances decide.

A SIMPLE PRINCIPLE

Maria Tallchief (b. 1925) was an American artist. She once shared a simple principle for becoming successful. But this principle is not only for artists—it applies to anyone in any field. The principle is:

see more, be more.

Curiosity is the driving force behind all progress. A person should always try to learn more. He should look more, listen more, and ask questions to expand his knowledge. The more knowledge someone gains, the more progress he achieves. And greater knowledge comes only to those who are always eager to know more.

Most people, however, remain unaware of their own ignorance. Without realizing it, they assume they already know enough. This mindset is harmful. Such a person is ignorant yet believes he is knowledgeable. He is unwise yet convinced he is wise. No matter how highly he values himself, in the real world he holds no value.

The best approach is for a person to think of himself as a student—and to always remain a student. He should never tire of seeking knowledge. His happiest moments should be when he discovers something new, when his knowledge increases.

The more a person knows, the more he becomes in this world. Intellectual growth strengthens action. It lifts a person from being ordinary to being extraordinary. Knowledge has no limit in this world, and therefore, the growth of knowledge has no limit. A person should always think of himself as “still learning,” so that his desire to know never fades.

NO DANGER

A thinker once said: The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.

In life, moments arise that appear dangerous. At such times, people often become afraid. But the right way to live is

not to treat danger as danger, but simply as a problem. When we see it as a problem, the mind begins working on a solution. In contrast, when we see it as danger, fear takes over. The person loses heart and gives up. Even what he could have done becomes difficult for him.

Anyone who steps into the struggle of life must first realize that he is not alone. Others like him are also striving in life according to their strength and courage. Alongside them is the system of nature, which operates on a larger scale. In this system, there is cold and heat, dryness and water, plains and mountains, flowers and thorns. Because of these mixed conditions, it is inevitable that different kinds of obstacles appear in a person's path. Many times, it seems as if his journey has come to a halt. Such experiences happen to everyone, and they will continue to happen, whether we like it or not.

But the reassuring truth is that the world is created in such a way that where there are opponents, there are also supporters. Where there are obstacles, there are also open doors of opportunity. The one who gets stuck in opposition or obstacles cannot complete his journey in this world. But the one who, when faced with challenges, directs his mind toward finding a solution will surely discover a way forward. No power can stop him from reaching his destination.

COURAGE WITHOUT CAUTION

Mickey Thompson (b. 1928) was born in America. He gained worldwide fame in car racing, to the point that he came to be called the Speed King. But in March 1988, he was shot and killed. At the time of his death, he was 59 years old.

Mickey Thompson was extremely daring. In November 1987, he told his friends in Los Angeles that some shady people had been threatening him over the phone. His friend Ernie Alvarado said: "Mickey told me he knew who wanted to kill him." When the friend asked if he had informed the police, Mickey replied, "There's no need."

But Mickey was mistaken. On a morning in early March 1988, while he was leaving his home in Bradbury, California, with his 41-year-old wife Trudy, to go to his office, two men on bicycles appeared and opened fire. Trudy cried out desperately, "Don't shoot, don't shoot!" But within minutes, a hail of bullets ended both of their lives.

Back in 1960, Mickey had become the first American to drive a car at 400 miles per hour. He achieved this in a special vehicle fitted with four engines. Commenting on his tragic death, *Time* magazine (March 28, 1988) wrote that the same disregard for danger that had made Mickey Thompson the king of speed became the cause of his death:

"The disregard for danger that marked Thompson's driving career may have led to his death in his own front yard." (p. 12)

Bravery and fearlessness are admirable qualities. But human beings, after all, have limitations. No one can bear absolute bravery or unlimited fearlessness. That is why, along with courage and boldness, caution is also necessary. A person must learn to act with wisdom and prudence. An unwise leap is just as wrong as a cowardly retreat.

CONVENTIONAL THINKING

Elias Howe (1819–1867) was an ordinary craftsman from Massachusetts, one of America’s well-known states. He died at the young age of just 48. Yet he gave the world something that brought a revolution in clothing production. This was the sewing machine, which he invented in 1845.

The machine Howe first built had a needle with the hole near the base, like ordinary hand needles. For thousands of years, people had been putting the hole at the base of the needle, so when Howe designed his sewing machine, he followed the same practice. But because of this, his machine didn’t work properly. At first, it could only stitch shoes. Sewing cloth was not possible on it.

For a long time, Howe struggled with this problem but couldn’t find a solution. Then he had a dream—and that dream gave him the answer. In it, he saw that men from a wild tribe had captured him and ordered him to make a sewing machine within 24 hours or be killed. He tried,

but couldn't finish the machine in time. When the deadline passed, the tribesmen rushed at him with spears. Looking closely, he noticed that each spear had a hole near its tip. As he was staring at this, he woke up. That was the clue he needed.

He put the hole at the tip of the needle, like the spear, and passed the thread through it. Now the problem was solved. The machine that hadn't worked with the hole at the top worked perfectly once the hole was moved to the lower side.

Howe's difficulty was that he couldn't rise above conventional thinking. He assumed that what people had done for thousands of years must be right. When his subconscious showed him another possibility, he understood at once and solved the problem. When a person throws himself fully into a task, he can discover its hidden secrets in the same way Howe did.

THE CONDITION FOR SUCCESS

As of 1990, at the time of this writing, Japan is widely recognized as an economic superpower. In the past, military strength was what made a nation a superpower. But Japan proved by its own example that a nation can also reach that status through economic development. Moreover, a country that becomes powerful through its

military eventually loses its strength, while an economic superpower faces no such limit.

How did Japan become an economic superpower? Not through political slogans or noisy protests, but through steady, quiet work. The most important part of this quiet effort was that Japan first accepted a smaller role for itself, and only later rose to a greater role.

Journalist Subhash Chakravarty, writing in the *The Times of India* (April 27, 1990, p. 8), observed:

Japan, having long recognised the U.S. as the most important external actor in Asia, is seeking to share power and influence with it without compromising Japan's own self-interests or ambitions.

In other words, Japan first accepted U.S. dominance in Asia and later moved to share influence without sacrificing its own interests.

This is the principle of progress in today's world: to become great, one must first accept being small. To gain dominance, one must first be willing to be dominated. Advancement comes to those who endure retreat before moving forward. In this world, loss comes first, and gain comes afterwards.

THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

Human beings fall into two categories. One group is shaped in the school of hardship, and the other in the school of ease. At first, it may seem better to grow up in comfort. But the true making of a human being happens only in hardship, not in ease. Someone has rightly said:

“It is not ease, but effort—not facility, but difficulty, that makes men.”

In the stream of life, countless people are struck by difficulties. Yet experience shows that generally there are two outcomes. One group cannot withstand hardship. They sink into despair and remain broken in spirit. The other group shows strength of character. They face hardships head-on and, in the end, succeed in building a life for themselves.

But this second group always pays a price for its success. Struggles with material things also make them materialistic in thinking. They see that being deprived of possessions made them worthless in society, and once they gained those possessions, they regained value in the same society. The result is that they become completely materialistic. For them, losing material things means real loss, and gaining them means real gain.

The true benefit of hardship lies in the lessons it teaches. But this benefit comes only when a person suffers misfortune yet is not crushed by it. He may experience

life's bitterness, but rises above it to reflect. Hardships and difficulties should serve as experiences to learn from—not as forces that shape his entire outlook.

LEARNING FROM THE ENEMY

In 1949, the Japanese held an industrial seminar. For this event, they sent a special invitation to Dr. Edward Deming from America. In his lecture, Dr. Deming presented a new approach to boosting industrial production. This was the idea of quality control (*Hindustan Times*, 28 December 1986).

For the Japanese, Americans were considered an enemy nation. In the Second World War, America had inflicted on Japan a crushing defeat and humiliation. One might expect that the Japanese would burn with hatred toward America. But instead, they rose above such negative emotions. This is why they were able to invite an American professor to their seminar, listen calmly to his ideas, and accept them wholeheartedly.

The Japanese took his advice to heart. They reorganized their entire industrial system around quality control. They set before their industrialists the goal of zero defects—that is, to produce goods completely free of flaws. Japanese seriousness and dedication ensured this goal was met. Soon their factories began producing flawless products. It

reached the point where a British shopkeeper remarked: “If I order a million items from Japan, I can be certain that not a single one will be defective.” As a result, Japanese products came to be trusted completely around the world. Their trade expanded rapidly, until they even dominated the American market—the very country from which they had first received this method through an American expert. In this world, those who achieve the greatest success are the ones who try to learn from everyone—whether friend or foe.

CLOSED MIND

The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BC) wrote that the perfect circle is the ideal form in geometry. On this basis, he argued that since nature always works in a perfect way, the paths along which it moves the heavenly bodies must also be perfect circles. This idea of Aristotle dominated people’s minds in ancient times. The astronomical systems developed in those days—for example, those of Ptolemy, Copernicus, and Tycho Brahe—all assumed that the planets of the solar system revolve in perfect circles in space.

Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) was probably the first person to challenge this. In 1609, through calculation,

he showed that Mars does not move around the sun in a perfect circle but in an elliptical orbit. He predicted that the orbits of all the other planets around the sun must also be elliptical. Today, Kepler's view is a well-established fact. For two thousand years, ancient astronomers remained absorbed in the idea of the perfect circle. They could not think differently about the motion of the planets. The reason was the authority of Aristotle's idea. They accepted it without debate as an unquestionable truth, and because of that, their minds could not move in any other direction. This is not just a matter of ancient times—it is true in every age. In all eras, certain ideas dominate people's minds so completely that they find it impossible to think independently outside of them. This happens in both religious and non-religious fields. Such a closed mind is the biggest obstacle to progress of any kind.

RISING HIGHER

On August 12, 1985, a Japan Airlines Boeing 747 took off from Tokyo. It was scheduled to reach Osaka in one hour. But only 10 minutes after takeoff, the pilot realized he had lost control of the aircraft. The plane was meant to fly at an altitude of 24,000 feet. But as it kept losing height, it dropped to 9,800 feet, and finally struck a mountain and

was destroyed. Five hundred and twenty passengers died in the crash. Among them were an Indian engineer, Mr. Kalyan Mukherjee, and his wife. Mr. Mukherjee was 41 years old at the time of the accident. He had recently gone to Japan on a business trip. From there, he wrote a letter to his 13-year-old son, Niranjan Mukherjee, telling him that on August 12 he and his wife were going on a pleasure trip from Tokyo to Osaka. (*Hindustan Times*, August 14, 1985)

One reason planes fly at high altitudes is to avoid colliding with mountains or tall buildings. For this flight, 24,000 feet was a safe height. But when the aircraft developed engine trouble, it could not stay at that altitude. It dropped to 9,800 feet, leaving the safe zone, and as a result it hit a mountain and was destroyed.

The same is true of human life. Our journey takes place among countless other people. If, in thought and attitude, we remain at a low level, we will keep clashing with others again and again. The only solution is to raise ourselves in thought and attitude to such a height that the possibility of conflict with others disappears. The Islamic principle of *i'raaz* (avoidance) provides exactly this elevation. In essence, *i'raaz* is the same as what some thinkers have called the "superior solution" to the problem of life. Traveling on the same level always carries the risk of conflict with others. That is why a wise person raises the level of his journey higher, so that no clash occurs. Choosing this higher wisdom is what *i'raaz* (avoidance) means.

LACK OF WISDOM

Someone said that in most situations a person can realistically achieve the “second best,” but he runs after the “first best.” The result is that in his greed for the impossible, he loses even what was possible.

A man studied at an Islamic seminary. After graduation, he became the *imam* (a prayer leader) of his village mosque on a small salary. Later, he met the director of a large Islamic seminary. Recognizing his abilities, the director invited him to join the institution. Before long, he was promoted and became the director’s assistant.

Now, within the institution’s spacious compound, he was given a clean house to live in. A jeep was placed at his disposal. Along with this came a good salary and other benefits. At this point, the imam should have been grateful to God and be content. But he saw the position of assistant as “second best.” He wanted the “first best”—that is, to take the director’s seat for himself.

So, he began making different kinds of destructive plans against the director. The details are not necessary here. In short, when the director learned about these schemes, he used his influence to have the imam expelled from the institution. His belongings were thrown out onto the street. The jeep was taken away. Forced to leave the city, he returned to his village and again became a mosque imam. Worse still, the bad reputation he earned from this incident meant that no other institution was willing to accept him anymore.

In this world, the secret of success is contentment and gratitude. This is exactly what the above saying describes as “second best.” Accepting the second best does not mean putting yourself down. It means beginning with what is practical. Very often, those who accept the second-best option at the initial stage often pave the way for the first-best later on. However, those who refuse to settle for anything less than perfection early on often end up losing both the second-best and the first-best.

ACCEPTING REALITY

In World War II, Japan was defeated by the United States. In April 1945, American troops landed in Japan. General Douglas MacArthur was appointed Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers in Japan, where he remained until 1951. Under his guidance, Japan’s new constitution was drafted and passed by the Japanese assembly on November 3, 1946.

This constitution reduced the emperor of Japan to the status of a symbolic ruler. Article 9 declared that the Japanese nation would never again maintain an army, navy, or air force, nor make any military preparations of any kind:

Land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. 10, p. 87).

On the surface, this constitution appeared to mean Japan's permanent national death. But Japan's leaders wisely accepted it completely. They realized that while the constitution blocked the path of military and political action, it left fully open the path of science and industry. The Japanese nation withdrew from the battlefield of war and politics and began to use the remaining opportunities in knowledge and industry. Within just forty years, historians were writing these words about Japan:

Defeated in World War II (1945), Japan emerged from the ruins of war as one of the major economic powers in the world (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. 5, p. 519).

Accepting the present opens the way to the future. Those who refuse to accept the present deprive themselves of the greater possibilities of the future as well.

THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

A Western thinker said: That which does not kill me makes me stronger.

When a person faces a serious difficulty and does not lose heart but instead thinks deeply to find a solution, he awakens a new strength within himself. He develops the ability to face unfavourable conditions and to keep moving forward despite obstacles. Hardship destroys the foolish

person, but for the wise person, hardship becomes a step toward progress.

Success in life relies on being open-minded, future-focused, and maintaining a positive attitude. Don't dwell on questions like "Why did this happen to me?" Instead, concentrate on "What should I do now that it has happened?"

We need to get over the questions that focus on the past and on the pain—Why did this happen to me? —and ask instead the question which opens doors to the future. Now that this has happened, what shall I do about it? (Rabbi Harold Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*)

The world we live in is such that unpleasant events are bound to happen. People face difficulties repeatedly. In these circumstances, the only way to achieve success is this: forget the past and think about the future. Do not grieve over lost opportunities, but direct all your attention to the opportunities that still remain, that have not yet been destroyed. Accepting the present opens the doors of the future. Refusing to accept the present deprives a person not only of the present, but also of the future to come.

WHO IS GUILTY?

A man wanted to pick a rose. Eagerly, he rushed toward it and, with a sudden jerk, plucked the flower. The rose was now in his hand, but in his haste several thorns

pierced his skin. His friend said, “That was foolish. You should have taken care to avoid the thorns. You tried to do a careful task carelessly, and now your hand is injured.”

The man grew angry and said, “It’s the thorns’ fault. They cut my palm and fingers, and yet you are blaming me.” His friend replied, “My friend, this is not about the thorns—it is about the system of nature. God has made the world in such a way that flowers always come with thorns. Our protests cannot change this system. Flowers with thorns will always be part of the world. Our success lies in recognizing this reality and finding a way to protect ourselves. The way forward is to avoid the thorns while reaching for the flower, not to fight with them.”

That flowers growing with thorns is no small matter. It is nature’s way of teaching a lesson. It is the language of plants announcing a truth about human life. It is an introduction to the creative plan on which this world is built. The message is that in this world, only those efforts succeed which are made with the principle of caution in mind.

Engaging in conflict where restraint is needed, and turning to agitation where strategy is required, is simply a sign of one’s own incompetence. When God has commanded avoidance, but one chooses confrontation instead, he makes himself guilty—even if he uses every word in the dictionary to prove others guilty.

EASE IN DIFFICULTY

In a traditional sugarcane press, when cane is put in, there is little pressure and it passes only once between the rollers. As a result, about 25 percent of the juice remains inside. In an electric crusher, the pressure is greater and the cane passes through twice, but still about 15 percent of the juice is left behind. In large mills, the pressure is much higher and the cane passes through four times. This way, almost all the juice is extracted.

This example shows the importance of “pressure.” God has placed countless possibilities in the things He created. But hidden potential only comes out when pressure is applied. The greater the pressure, the more potential is revealed.

The same is true for human beings. Every person is born with immense potential. Each one is like a treasure chest of possibilities. In ordinary circumstances, these remain hidden. They appear only when a person is put under pressure—when he goes through a process that squeezes his personality. In history, those who achieved great progress were the ones who faced pressure in their environment. They were the ones who discovered the creative secret of “Verily, with hardship comes ease.” They entered life’s field with the determination to grow the crop of ease on the land of hardship.

To the one who sees with a human eye, hardship appears as hardship; to the one who sees with a divine eye, it appears as the beginning of ease.

SHOPKEEPING

A true shopkeeper is one who, while being a seller, also knows what it means to be a buyer. He is not only focused on selling but also understands the mindset of the customer. He knows himself, and he knows the potential buyer who walks into his shop.

The shopkeeper and the customer are two completely different kinds of people. The shopkeeper thinks in terms of money, while the customer thinks in terms of goods. The shopkeeper looks at the customer's pocket, while the customer looks at the shopkeeper's products. But the shopkeeper who only knows how to take money from the customer's pocket will never become successful.

The successful shopkeeper is one who can read the customer like a book. He makes the customer's need his own. He feels the customer's heartbeat in his own chest. He understands what the customer wants, and what will truly satisfy him.

One type of shopkeeper is the one who simply sits in his shop. If a customer comes, he looks at the price list and tells him the rate. If the customer buys, he gives the item. If not, he calmly sits back down and perhaps reads a newspaper.

Another type of shopkeeper is the one whose body is in the shop but whose mind is in the streets and markets. Mentally, he walks among the customers. He knows their

needs before they even speak. He tries to please them wholeheartedly, even if they offend him. He becomes their well-wisher to the utmost degree, even if it is their first and only visit.

PRESENT-DAY SOCIETY

I have before me *The Indian Express* of 24 November 1988. On its front page, it is reported that a 26-year-old woman named Pravesh in Delhi was killed by her mother-in-law, Barsa Rani. She poured kerosene over her daughter-in-law and set her on fire—simply because Pravesh had not met the family's demand to bring ten thousand rupees from her parents' home. The very next day, *The Indian Express* (25 November 1988) carried the headline:

Another Dowry Victim

According to the report, another 26-year-old woman in Delhi, Arveen Rana, was killed by her in-laws for the same reason: she did not fulfill their dowry demand. Such news appears in newspapers almost every day. Police call such deaths “dowry deaths.” Because these incidents are increasing, the matter was raised in the Rajya Sabha. According to *Hindustan Times* (25 November 1988), the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr. P. Chidambaram, gave the following figures:

- 1985: 999 deaths
- 1986: 1,319 deaths
- 1987: 1,786 deaths

This disturbing cruelty reflects a troubling aspect of present-day society. Such incidents suggest that the society we live in can, at times, fall short of the standards of civility expected of human beings. In such circumstances, raising slogans against communal riots or issuing statements of condemnation may amount to little more than a reactive response, without producing meaningful results. For a sensible person, the wiser course is to prioritize safety and avoid confrontation. Even when provoked, one should remain composed. People do not engage in conflict with those acting irrationally; instead, they step back and avoid escalation.

IN A DREAM

Mr. Ram Ratan Kapila runs a business in refrigerators and air conditioners. His company is called Kapsons, with its head office on Asaf Ali Road in New Delhi. Mr. Kapila needed a slogan for his firm. He placed an advertisement in the newspaper offering a reward to anyone who could come up with a good, concise slogan. Despite repeated announcements, no one managed to provide one that satisfied him. Some people sent in suggestions, but Mr.

Kapila rejected them. “A slogan should be penetrating. But these slogans were not penetrating,” he said in a meeting on December 4, 1983. Mr. Kapila stayed preoccupied with this problem day and night. He kept thinking about it, constantly searching for the right slogan, but without success. Nearly six years passed in this struggle. Then, one night, he had a dream. In it, he was walking in a garden. The weather was delightful, and birds of many kinds were singing in the trees. Seeing this, he felt overjoyed, and the words came out of his mouth:

“If there is weather, let it be like this.”

As he spoke, he woke up. Suddenly, he realized that he had discovered the slogan he had been chasing for years. Instantly, the English version formed in his mind:

KAPSONS: the weather masters

Dreams are the continuation of the mind’s activity during sleep. If you keep your mind absorbed in something all day, it will appear in your dreams at night. Many of history’s great inventions first came through dreams. The reason is that the inventor was so deeply engaged with his work that even in sleep he dreamed about it. A dream is essentially the outcome of complete mental involvement. For such a person, the day is not twelve hours long but twenty-four. This is the secret of success in any mission. Without such deep focus, no great achievement is possible—neither in this world nor in the next.

A SUCCESSFUL JOURNEY

On the morning of January 20, 1984, a Thai Airways Boeing 747 took off from Karachi, heading west, at an altitude of 29,000 feet. At the same time, an Indian Airlines flight was scheduled to depart from Bombay for Delhi, also at 29,000 feet. Just before departure, it was discovered that the Thai Airways plane was already flying along the same path. Had the Indian Airlines pilot taken off as planned, the two planes would have collided over Mandsaur in Madhya Pradesh. Both aircrafts, with all passengers, would have been destroyed (*The Times of India*, January 25, 1984).

Air traffic control received this information at the very last moment. They immediately told the Indian Airlines captain: either fly at a lower altitude of 25,000 feet, or delay takeoff by 25 minutes if you wish to fly at 29,000 feet. The captain chose the second option and took off 25 minutes later. In this way, both planes avoided a mid-air collision. According to the original schedule, the Indian Airlines flight would have passed over Mandsaur at 7:00 a.m., but after the change, it crossed at 7:30 a.m. An Indian Airlines officer commented on the incident:

“It was a miracle which saved passengers on both aircrafts.”

In a broader sense, life works the same way. If you want to fly at “29,000 feet,” remember that others are also flying at that height. In such a situation, you have only two choices: either ignore others and go ahead and then perish while setting a false example of sacrifice; or show the “miracle” of adjustment—either by flying lower to get ahead or by delaying your flight by “half an hour.” In both cases, you succeed and reach your destination safely.

POSSIBLE AND IMPOSSIBLE

Former Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri passed away in January 1966. After his death, the Congress Party made Mrs. Indira Gandhi the Prime Minister. However, she remained in conflict with Morarji Desai (1896–1995), because he too wanted to be Prime Minister. After the 1967 elections, Morarji Desai was made Deputy Prime Minister.

But Morarji Desai considered the post of Deputy Prime Minister beneath him. So, the struggle continued. Former Information Minister Inder Kumar Gujral wrote that in 1969, Mrs. Gandhi, through him, offered Desai the position of President as a greater honour. Gujral says that when he presented this proposal, Desai immediately replied:

“Why not she herself?”

Meaning: let Indira Gandhi become President and make me Prime Minister instead. (*The Times of India*, July 12, 1987).

Events show that Morarji Desai eventually broke away from Congress. To become Prime Minister, he stirred the entire country. After the Janata Party's victory in the March 1977 elections, he briefly became Prime Minister. But soon after, he faced political decline and never recovered.

The real reason for Desai's failure was that he chased the impossible while ignoring the possible. If he had realized that, under the circumstances, the highest attainable post for him was the presidency—not the prime ministership—he could have avoided disgrace and failure. But by running after the impossible, he lost even the possible. Chasing the impossible deprives a person of what is within reach. On the other hand, one who accepts the possible not only secures it but may, in time, gain the impossible too.

OPPORTUNITIES OF EVERY KIND

On the morning of February 26, 1988, all Delhi newspapers carried this headline on their front pages: Successful test of India's first missile. On February 25, amid applause in Parliament, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi announced that India had developed a surface-to-surface missile, *Prithvi*, and successfully tested it. The missile was entirely developed with Indian technology.

It was purely defensive in nature, with a range of 250 kilometers. With this, India joined four countries—the United States, Russia, France, and China—that had the capability to produce land-based missiles.

The Prithvi missile was developed at the DRDL in Hyderabad under the leadership of Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam. As reported by *Hindustan Times* on February 26, 1988:

“The ‘Prithvi’ missile was fabricated at the Defense Research and Development Laboratory at Hyderabad under a team of scientists headed by Dr Abdul Kalam.”

Defense research is extremely delicate work. For it, people are chosen who combine two qualities: high technical expertise and personal integrity. The appointment of Dr. Abdul Kalam to such a prominent position carries a powerful lesson. It shows that in India, every kind of opportunity is fully open to minorities. If they develop ability, they can rise to the highest positions even in the most advanced fields.

The truth is that in today’s world, the real value lies in ability. Once a person proves ability, he gains respect everywhere. Without proving it, he faces humiliation everywhere.

DESPITE DISABILITY

I lost my leg in 1982 and have been sailing around the world ever since,” Tristan Jones—sailor, author and adventurer—told a group of handicapped Thai children in Bangkok, reports DPA. The message was clear,”You must not Wait for people to help you. You must learn to help yourself and must do things your own way,” said the bearded Welsh captain. Jones, 53, has been doing extraordinary things his own way since 1952 when he was discharged from Britain’s Royal Navy for being “physically unfit for sea.” He had received a leg wound in active duty during World War II that eventually led to his invalid status and in 1982 resulted in the amputation of his left leg, above the knee. Since 1953, Jones has been proving to the world that he is anything but “physically unfit for sea.” In the past 34 years he has sailed 640,000 kms (all in craft under 40 feet), made 20 trans-Atlantic Ocean crossings (nine single-handed) and circumnavigated the world three times. (*The Times of India*, New Delhi, August 18, 1987)

THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

Dr. C. V. Raman (Sir Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman, 1888–1970) was one of India’s most renowned scientists. In 1930, he received the Nobel Prize in Physics—the first Asian ever to do so in the field of science. From that point on, he gained worldwide recognition. His scientific discovery, the *Raman Effect*, is now counted among the established principles of science. Raman was born into a humble family. His father worked as a school teacher earning just ten rupees a month. In such difficult conditions, Raman, through extraordinary hard work, earned his place in the world of knowledge. He described his journey to success in these words:

“A long history of frustration, disappointment, struggle and every kind of tribulation.”

When someone tried to belittle his achievement by saying that he had reached his discovery merely by chance—as, they claimed, many other scientists had—Raman responded seriously:

“The idea that a scientific discovery can be made by accident is ruled out by the fact that the accident, if it is one, never occurs except to the right man.”

Summing up the lesson of his final years of research, Dr. Raman expressed it in these words:

“The right man, right thinking, right instruments, and right results.”

WHAT A DIFFERENCE

On September 1, 1983, a Korean Airlines passenger plane (Flight 007) took off from New York for Seoul. While flying over Kamchatka, it was shot down by Soviet forces. All 269 people on board, including crew members, were killed. Later, the Soviet government explained that the aircraft had not been shot down as a passenger plane; their forces had mistaken it for an American spy plane (RC-135) and fired in defense. But the United States rejected this explanation. It argued that the difference between the spy plane and a Boeing 747 passenger aircraft was so obvious that no radar operator could have confused one for the other.

Then, on July 3, 1988, a similar incident took place—but in reverse. An Iran Air passenger plane (Airbus A-300), flying from Tehran to Dubai, was shot down over the Persian Gulf by the U.S. Navy warship USS Vincennes. All 290 people on board, including the crew, were killed. The United States again explained the attack as a mistake, saying its Navy had misidentified the aircraft as a military jet (an F-14 fighter) and fired in self-defense.

But America's critics rejected this reasoning. They pointed out that the Airbus was far larger than the jet fighter, and the jet was about 250 kilometers faster. Such differences would have been clearly visible on a radar screen. So, they argued, confusion was impossible. (*The Times of India*, July 5, 1988, p.12; *Hindustan Times*, July 5, 1988, p.13)

Human beings are quick to recognize the mistakes of others, but when it comes to recognizing their own, they turn into fools. This double standard is the root of all problems. If people applied just one standard, all problems would disappear on their own.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PURPOSE

In the Hassan district of Karnataka, there is a village called Thapperghatta. A man named Lachha Naik lived there. He worked as a night watchman and lived in a hut. He had four children. One day he decided to offer three of his daughters as a sacrifice to the goddess Chamundeshwari. On April 23, 1988, he brought the idol of the goddess, performed rituals, and then killed his three daughters—aged one and a half, three, and thirteen—with a sickle. When his eight-year-old son, Raj Kumar, tried to resist, he attacked him too, cutting off his right hand. After this horrific act, he fled. Four days later, his body was found hanging from a lone mango tree.

His wife, Lilli Thamma (35 years old), was given five thousand rupees from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund and one thousand rupees from the Indian Red Cross Society. Now she is making plans for her son's future. She believes her son must be educated. She is ready to work all her life, if necessary, to ensure his schooling. As a widow, she expects a pension of fifty rupees a month. Her son will also

receive about the same amount as a disability allowance. Raj Kumar, who lost all five fingers of his right hand, is now learning to write with his left hand. (*The Times of India*, April 28, 1988)

Lilli Thamma had lost everything. At first glance, it seemed likely she might take her own life, or spend her days weeping with her son. But she did no such thing. She put the past behind her and began to plan positively for the future. The reason was that in working for her disabled son's future, she had found a purpose for her own life.

A person with purpose is never truly deprived; in this world, the only one deprived is the person who has lost all sense of purpose.

WRONG WAY ROUND

Imagine a man who wants his son to become a doctor, but tells him: "First rent a shop in the market and open a clinic. Then you can study medicine." If a father gave such advice, people would call him mad, or at the very least, not serious. Everyone knows medicine is studied first, and only then is a clinic opened. Strangely, however, our leaders do exactly this backward act. And yet, no one calls them unserious. Instead, they are honoured with titles like "thinker" and "leader."

In modern times, nearly every Muslim leader has offered this kind of futile advice to the community: First win

political freedom, then start building the nation. First get a piece of land, then establish an Islamic system there. First overthrow the government, then begin social reform. First have parliament pass a law, then work on changing people's minds, and so on.

All such ideas are as meaningless as opening a medical clinic before studying medicine. This is why, even after more than a hundred years of struggle, Muslims have gained nothing but destruction and failure.

A human being is not like iron or wood that can be shaped step by step. A person is formed once, and the way he is shaped the first time is how he remains. That is why movements focused only on external goals always fail at the second stage. After reaching some outward target, their leaders start making speeches about reforming individuals. But such speeches bring no real results. This only shows ignorance of human psychology. Sadly, all modern Muslim leaders have been examples of this same ignorance.

Nation-building, in essence, is the cultivation of individual intellects. Once an intellect is developed, everything else follows naturally; without it, nothing of real value can be achieved.

JUSTICE IS ALIVE

On 31 October 1984, India's former Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, was assassinated at her New Delhi residence. Four men were involved in the killing. Her

security guards, Beant Singh and Satwant Singh, fired the shots. Beant Singh was immediately shot dead by other guards, while Satwant Singh was arrested. The other two, Kehar Singh and Balbir Singh, were accused of planning and conspiring in the murder. The three men were put on trial. On 22 January 1986, Delhi's Additional Judge Mahesh Chandra announced his verdict, sentencing Satwant Singh, Kehar Singh, and Balbir Singh to death. The case then went to the High Court. On 3 December 1986, the Delhi High Court confirmed the death sentences for all three. The men appealed to the Supreme Court, which delivered its unanimous judgment on 3 August 1988. The three-judge bench included Justice G.L. Oza, Justice S.C. Agrawal, and Justice B.C. Ray.

The Supreme Court upheld the death sentences of Satwant Singh and Kehar Singh but fully acquitted Balbir Singh. No direct evidence linked him to the murder. For example, the prosecution argued that Indira Gandhi was killed because Sikhs were angry over Operation Blue Star, and that Balbir Singh had been heard talking of revenge. Addressing this, Justice Oza wrote that if anger or protest over Operation Blue Star were taken as evidence, then all Sikhs upset about the operation would have to be treated as conspirators. Justice Oza further observed that it is preferable to err by releasing a person than by unjustly punishing him, stating: "It is safer to err in acquitting than in convicting."

It's enough to quote only Balbir Singh's remark about this

incident. He said, "I had no hope of getting justice, but now I am convinced that justice is alive in this country."

NOT DESTRUCTION

On 29 November 1987, Korean Air Flight 858 took off from Baghdad, bound for Seoul. While flying at 37,000 feet over the Andaman Sea, a sudden explosion occurred, killing all 115 passengers instantly. The blast was so powerful that the pilot did not even have a second to send a distress signal to the airport. This sabotage was planned by North Korea. As part of the plan, a 24-year-old North Korean woman was trained and sent on the flight. She boarded the plane in Baghdad, placed a transistor bomb in the overhead compartment, and got off in Abu Dhabi. The powerful time bomb exploded at the set time, destroying the aircraft in an instant.

The purpose of this plan was to sabotage the 1988 Olympic Games, scheduled to be held in Seoul, the capital of South Korea. The communist regime of North Korea could not tolerate this honour going to South Korea. North Korea's Stalinist dictator, Kim Il Sung, ordered his secret agency to blow up a South Korean plane so that travel to South Korea would seem unsafe and people would cancel their plans to attend the Olympics. It was for this destructive aim that the plane was destroyed.

The destruction of the South Korean plane was a terrible

crime but, as terrorism, it failed completely. No nation withdrew from the Olympics; instead, 161 countries announced their participation:

“The destruction of KAL 858 was a monstrous crime, but as an act of terrorism it proved to be a monumental failure. No country was frightened away from the Olympics. On the contrary, 161 countries have announced they will attend, more than at any previous Games.”—*Reader’s Digest*, August 1988

Any act of destruction against another is really an act of destruction against oneself. Such a person harms only himself and cannot truly harm anyone else.

WORDS OR REALITY

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) was awarded the title of “Sir” by the British government in 1915. But in 1919, when the British carried out a brutal massacre of unarmed Indians at Amritsar, Tagore returned the title.

Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) was given the same title in 1922. He accepted it—and never gave it back.

Personally, I do not consider accepting the title of “Sir” to be wrong. But, given the kind of themes Iqbal expressed in his poetry, the British honour seemed completely out of

place for him. For example, he wrote:

Nahin tera nasheman qasr-e-sultani ke gunbad par
Tu shaheen hai, baseera kar paharon ki chatanon mein
 Your dwelling is not on the dome of a royal palace;
 You are an eagle—make your home on the rocky
 peaks of mountains.

By his own standard, taking the title of “Sir” was the same as building a nest on the dome of a royal palace. He urged others to avoid such “nest-building,” but in his own case, he kept his nest there until the very end.

This example illustrates the state of the leaders who emerged among Muslims in modern times. Almost all Muslim leaders of the present age were essentially either poets, like Iqbal, or orators, like Muhammad Ali, or writers, like Abul A’la Maududi. They were not thinkers or men of mature insight, as true leaders ought to be. Poetry, oratory, and literary writing are, in fact, merely different forms of verbal expression. As a result, these leaders continued to display brilliance in words, but in terms of the realities of life, they failed to provide Muslims with sound and meaningful direction.

The result of this imaginary leadership was that while the leaders built up their own personalities, the affairs of the entire community were ruined. A man who puts on shows of empty brilliance may well make newspaper headlines, but such performances do nothing to build the future of a nation.

A GREATER DANGER

Dr. Dennis Breo interviewed doctors who had treated famous personalities. He later published a book titled *Extraordinary Care* (1986), in which he revealed some striking facts.

He wrote that famous personalities often turn out to be “impossible patients.” For example, Hitler suffered from a skin disease, but he considered it beneath his dignity to remove his clothes in front of a doctor. As a result, he never received proper treatment. The American billionaire Howard Hughes had a decayed tooth but never opened his mouth for a doctor. Instead, he preferred to drink alcohol to dull the pain.

About the Shah of Iran, he wrote:

“The Shah of Iran refused to be treated for his leukemia because he felt it would weaken him politically.” (*The Times of India*, March 19, 1987, p.7)

The Shah considered his blood disease a threat to his rule. But later events showed that political disorder was the greater danger. What ended his reign was not leukemia, but political turmoil. He ignored the bigger threat and focused all his attention on the smaller one. As a result, his government collapsed precisely when he thought he had secured it.

Worrying about small dangers while ignoring bigger ones is often the main cause of failure—whether for famous people or ordinary ones.

AFTER THE TIME

Jean Bedel Bokassa was born in 1921. He became a General in the Central African army. Not content with this position, in January 1966 he staged a military coup, deposed President David Dacko, and made himself the President of Central Africa. But even after becoming President, Bokassa was not satisfied. He feared he might lose the next election. So, in 1976 he dissolved Parliament and declared himself Emperor. He wore the crown and was called Emperor Bokassa. Yet the problem was not solved. Emperor Bokassa now faced what the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Vol. 3, p. 1100) described as the “realities of French economic control.” The valuable mines of Central Africa were in France’s hands. In the new political order, France felt its economic interests were threatened. With French support, another military coup took place in 1980, and David Dacko was restored as President. In June 1987, Bokassa was executed.

After the coup, Bokassa managed to leave the country. But in October 1986 he returned to Central Africa. On arrival, he was arrested (*Indian Express*, 9 June 1987). He faced

serious charges, including ordering the killing of 40 people and handing out millions of dollars in bribes from the state treasury. The State Prosecutor, Gabriel Mboudou, told the criminal court in Bangui that after the crimes of Bokassa's 14-year rule, it was necessary to sentence him to death. On 8 June 1987, Bokassa appeared in court and said:

“Today, I only want to live in peace as a simple citizen.”

If a person chooses contentment, he never has to face disgrace or failure.

CHURCHILL'S TRIBUTE

Sir Winston Churchill (1874–1965) was one of Britain's most distinguished statesmen. He served as Prime Minister from 1940 to 1945. Western historians note that he led Britain from near defeat to victory in World War II.

Churchill was a leader in war, not in peace. The political awareness of the British people deserves recognition, for immediately after the war, when general elections were held, they did not vote for their wartime hero. They believed Churchill was not the right person to lead the nation's reconstruction.

Churchill possessed many striking qualities. One of them was described by Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit in

her autobiography. In response to India's demand for independence, Churchill had once declared that he had not become the Prime Minister of the British Empire to preside over its liquidation. It was, therefore, no surprise that we did not love him. What was surprising, however, was that when he finally met my brother (Jawaharlal Nehru) after the formation of the Interim Government, the two developed mutual regard and spoke openly. When they parted, Churchill paid Nehru this memorable tribute: "I want to say that you have conquered two of man's greatest enemies—hate and fear."—Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, *The Scope of Happiness: a Personal Memoir*, 1979, p. 283

HOW DIFFICULT, HOW EASY

Once met a man who held a prestigious university degree. During our conversation he said, "Maulana, you publish an English magazine, but the English in it is incorrect." I asked him to give an example. He was holding the May 1986 issue of *Al-Risala*. On the back cover was an English article (published in both Urdu and English). It read:

"To spread the word of God is the highest form of charity. It appeals to the mind, the heart, the soul. That being the earnest endeavour of this magazine, how noble-spirited it would be of you, dear readers, if you sent it on regularly to

friends and relatives. Make a gift of it. Think of a whole year's subscription as being both a delightful present as well as a contribution to a worthy cause."

The man pointed to the word "sent" in the fourth line of the English magazine—shown in the fifth line of the paragraph above—and said:

"Look, this is wrong. It should be if you send, not if you sent, as you have written."

However, those well acquainted with the English language know that this objection is unfounded. I replied, "Pardon me, but you have said this out of eagerness to object, not out of understanding. You have not examined the matter grammatically; otherwise, you would not have said so." I explained that since the principal clause of the sentence contains the word would (the second form), the subordinate clause must also take sent (the second form). This is the rule of English grammar:

The form 'sent' is grammatically necessitated by the use of the word 'would' in the principal clause of the sentence. The other possible alternative would be 'could send,' but not 'send.'

After my explanation, the gentleman remained silent, though he did not admit his mistake. How easy it is to say, "You are wrong," and how difficult to say, "I am wrong."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Syed Mushtaq Ali (1914-2005) is one of India's most famous cricketers. An interview with him by Sharad Verma was published in *Hindustan Times* (15 May 1987). He wrote that very few people in Indian cricket history have achieved the extraordinary place Mushtaq Ali did. For nearly twenty years, he was a cricketing hero. Sir Neville Cardus said that Mushtaq was like an acrobat who could make the impossible possible. Keith Miller said he was an unbelievably fine player of their time.

His fame began in 1930 when he was only 16. He did not play often, but whenever he did, his performance stood out. In 1945–46, during a match in Calcutta between Australia and India, Mushtaq Ali was dropped from the Indian team. This sparked major protests in Calcutta, with the slogan echoing everywhere:

“No Mushtaq, No Test.”

Eventually, the organizers reinstated him. Now, at 72, recalling his past to Sharad Verma, he said: once in England, during a match between India and England, the English captain was Wally Hammond. Mushtaq Ali began scoring runs and reached the nineties. Though Hammond was the opposing captain, he could not suppress his admiration. He came quickly, patted Mushtaq on the shoulder, and said:

“Steady, my boy, steady, get your hundred first.”

The defining trait of a spiritually dead person is denial, while that of a spiritually alive person is acknowledgment.

When a spiritually alive person encounters a truth or observes a virtue, he cannot help but acknowledge it—even if doing so means admitting his own defeat.

RESILIENCE

In Delhi, in a colony called Vishnu Vihar, lived a woman named Kamla Devi Aggarwal with her son and grandson. She was 99 years old and mostly bedridden due to age.

On 15 December 1988, an incident occurred. Three thieves forced open the back door and broke into the house. The family woke up, and though the thieves did not succeed in stealing much, they stole valuables worth about ten thousand rupees from Kamla Devi's room.

They did not touch or harm her. Yet, in the morning, she was found dead. According to *The Times of India* (16 December 1988):

“She took one look at the robbers and died of shock.”

In that house were Kamla Devi, her son, and her grandson. But only the old woman died on seeing the thieves. What made the difference? It was courage. The son and grandson had the strength to withstand the shock, so they survived. But the old woman, having lost her inner strength, died immediately on seeing them.

This world is full of accidents. Adverse circumstances are an inseparable part of life. In such a world, only a person

with resilience can succeed—the one who can remain firm in distressing situations. One who lacks this inner strength will meet the same end as that old woman. Resilience turns the weak into the strong; without it, even the strong become weak and defeated.

AGAINST ONESELF

In the present scientific age, one of the new weapons developed was the use of poisonous gases, stored and turned into “bombs” to be dropped on the enemy. However, such stockpiles are now being destroyed, as experience has shown that they pose a serious danger even to the country that possesses them. A report from the United States (*The Times of India*, January 24, 1989) stated that, after years of study, the U.S. army decided to destroy 69,453 rockets filled with deadly nerve gas, stored in Richmond, Kentucky. For this purpose, a special furnace would be built at the depot. Similar rockets were stored at seven other sites. All of them would be destroyed in incinerators. These deadly gas weapons were found to be as dangerous to the possessor as to the enemy. If stored too long, they could suddenly ignite, releasing an odourless, invisible mist that would kill everything in its path:

“These poison gas weapons are now acknowledged to be as much a threat to the possessor as to the

potential enemy. If kept too long, they could ignite spontaneously, releasing an odourless, invisible mist that would kill everything in the path.”

Once a person adopts a destructive approach, they cannot escape its harmful consequences—no matter how powerful they may be, or how advanced and carefully designed their plan may be.

HIGH THINKING

A publishing house in Tokyo has printed a 160-page book. It is an introduction to Japanese society and the temperament of the Japanese people. The book is titled:

Chie Nakane, *Japanese Society* (1987).

The author of this book is a woman, Chie Nakane, who is a professor of social anthropology at Tokyo University. She has explained in detail what the mental make-up of the Japanese people is. According to her description, the mindset of the Japanese can be summarized in these words: the constant desire to rise a little higher than the average (p.155).

The author considers this to be the way of life of the Japanese. They treat it as something sacred, almost like a religious teaching, and always try to live by it. There is no standstill in life. A person will either fall downward or rise

upward. The principle is so absolute that if you do not lift yourself upward, you will automatically begin to decline. No further effort is required to fall.

This principle applies equally to both religious and worldly matters. A true believer is one whose faith is continuously growing. If the process of strengthening faith comes to a halt, then the person begins his journey toward decline. There is no possibility of remaining fixed in one state.

The same is true of worldly life. In worldly matters too, a person must keep moving forward in development. Whoever cannot maintain the process of progress will first fall into stagnation, and then slowly fade away. One must always remain concerned about one's growth. To stop caring about growth is to hand oneself over to death.

NECESSARY PREPARATION

A film has been made on the life of Gandhi, which became quite famous under the title "Gandhi." The role of Gandhi was played by the British actor Ben Kingsley (b. 1943).

In order to mould himself into the role of Gandhi, Kingsley went through extraordinary effort. His real-life lifestyle was very luxurious. His dining table was more lavishly filled than the traditional royal or noble tables of earlier times. But to play the role of Gandhi, he lived for a long time in near-starvation conditions.

Kingsley was a stout man, while Gandhi was thin and frail, often walking with a stick in his hand. For the performance to appear real, Kingsley had to look like the lean figure of Gandhi on the screen. He achieved this by continuous fasting and eating very little, until he lost seven kilograms of weight. The same rigorous preparation was required of the Marathi woman who played Gandhi's wife Kasturba in the film.

To play an artificial role in a fictional story is difficult, but far more difficult is to play a role in real life as the leader of a nation. Yet how strange it is that in the field of national leadership, people jump in without any preparation, as though no effort is required at all.

National leadership is undoubtedly the hardest of all tasks. To play Gandhi's role in a film, Kingsley had to subdue his body. To play the role of a true national leader, one has to subdue one's ego. In the first case, the actor had to reduce the fat of his body. In the second, the leader has to reduce the fat of his self.

Those who step into the role of guiding a people without proper preparation are not their leaders but their ruiners.

COMMERCIAL SUCCESS

American businessmen employ every imaginable and unimaginable method to expand their trade. For example, in America, almost everything can be obtained on installment—whether it is a vacuum cleaner or a grand

mansion spread over several acres, a motor car or even a jet aircraft. Everything can be bought on easy installments. So much so that among Americans there is a common saying: if you have the ability to pay installments, you could even buy America, provided it were for sale.

One of the most important features of American business is what is called customer service. Major American companies are always striving to please their customers and make them satisfied.

An example of this customer service is that an item purchased from one branch of a business can be returned to any other branch, in any city, simply with the explanation that “I didn’t like it after buying it.” No irritation, no questioning. All you need is the receipt, and the money is refunded immediately. The phrase “Goods once sold cannot be returned” is alien to American business vocabulary.

If in India some people were to establish a limited company or cooperative society, and with joint investment, open departmental stores in all major cities, where every type of item was sold, and if they gave the guarantee that goods purchased from one store could be returned at any other store, such a business would create a sensation across the country. It would certainly achieve enormous success.

This field of trade in India is completely open. The opportunities here are so great that one could even achieve monopoly-level success. However, this possibility can only be realized by those who possess the necessary qualities—hard work, honesty, and teamwork.

A SIMPLE SOLUTION

A man once wrote about his experience. With some paraphrasing, it goes like this: he was travelling through a desert region in a horse-carriage. Along the way, signs of a storm began to appear. The coachman stopped and explained that this area often experienced terrifying storms—so powerful that they could blow away huge objects. The signs indicated that such a storm was approaching, and therefore they needed to get down from the carriage and prepare for safety.

As the storm drew nearer, we moved towards a tree to seek shelter. The coachman saw us heading there and shouted. He said, “Never go under a tree! In such storms, big trees are uprooted. Taking shelter under a tree is extremely dangerous.” He explained that there was only one way to survive: lie face down in the open ground.

We obeyed his instructions and lay face down on the earth. The storm came, and it came with great force. It swept away many trees and even sand dunes. But the entire storm passed above us. On the ground’s surface, we lay safe. After a while, when the storm weakened, we got up and realized that the coachman’s advice had been completely right (*Zikra Digest*, November 1989).

When storms arise, their force remains mostly above the surface; the ground below is spared from their direct impact. That is why trees standing tall are often uprooted, while the grass spread across the earth remains intact.

In such moments, the best way to survive a storm is to lower oneself for a while. This is a lesson from nature—it teaches us how to endure the tempests of life. The principle is simple: when the storm rises, lower your flag temporarily. If someone speaks provocatively, close your ears to it. If someone throws mud at your wall, wash it away with water. If someone raises slogans against you, occupy yourself in praying for him instead.

AGAINST THE TIMES

On July 6, 1989, *The Times of India* published a report written by Mr. Raman Nanda about Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's son, Rahul Gandhi.

Rahul Gandhi had been admitted to the History (Honours) course at St. Stephen's College, New Delhi. He was one of the 76 students selected for this subject. When Rahul went to college, security was on continuous guard. He traveled to and from college surrounded by commandos (Black Cats).

One of the college teachers, Dr. S. C. Bhargava, a lecturer in physics, received a phone call from "a student" who wanted some advice. Dr. Bhargava invited him to his home. But when Dr. Bhargava arrived, he found the house surrounded by security personnel, who stopped him from entering. He was only allowed in after he proved his identity as Dr. Bhargava, the very person whom the student had come to consult.

This VIP student was none other than Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's son, Rahul Gandhi. According to the report, Rahul asked Dr. Bhargava for advice on whether he should study economics or history. Dr. Bhargava told him that, based on his grades, it would be difficult to get into the economics program, so he should choose history instead. As the newspaper stated:

“Rahul, who sought Dr. Bhargava's advice on whether he should take up economics or history, was told by the lecturer that considering his percentage, admission to the economics course may be difficult and he should instead opt for history (p.5).”

When academic competition reaches a point where even the Prime Minister's son must gain admission purely on merit, the demand for preferential entry becomes not only unreasonable but also impossible to achieve.

TRULY ALIVE OR SPIRITUALLY DEAD

There are two ways a car can move. One is when a driver is at the wheel. The other is when the engine is started and the car is left to run on the road by itself. On the surface, both cars seem to be moving. But in reality, there is a big difference. A car with a driver reaches its

destination, while a driverless car only runs for a while before it crashes and comes to an end.

When a sensible driver controls a car, he watches the road as he drives. He moves forward or stops as needed. Sometimes he goes ahead, other times he reverses. Sometimes he drives straight, other times he turns left or right. This is the kind of car that successfully reaches its destination.

By contrast, a car running without a driver keeps going blindly in one direction. It has no sense or awareness. It neither stops nor turns back. It never changes direction, nor does it slow down. It just rushes forward without control. The only end for such a car is to run a short distance and then crash, destroying itself.

This example illustrates the difference between a living person and a dead one. A living person is conscious and wise; a dead person lacks awareness and understanding. A living person knows when to speak and when to remain silent, when to move forward and when to pause, when to advance and when to retreat, when to hasten and when to slow down. Such a person ultimately achieves success.

In contrast, a dead person lacks such discernment. He does not know how to stop after speaking or pause after acting. He insists only on having his own way and refuses to accept any opposing view. Such a person is spiritually dead. In God's world, his only fate is to become a symbol of destruction and loss.

A SUICIDE

Mrs. Padma Desai was the daughter of well-known industrialist Raja Ram Kirloskar. She was married to Mr. Kantilal Desai, the son of former Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai. From this, one can imagine her social and financial status. Yet on November 16, 1984, she jumped from the fifth-floor flat where she lived and took her own life. She was 51 years old. Immediately after the fall, she was taken to the hospital, but doctors declared that she had died before reaching there.

Why did she end her life? The news report explained it in these words:

Padma committed suicide after hearing that the family has lost a case in the Supreme Court to retain their flat.

In other words, after learning that her family had lost their Supreme Court case to keep their flat, she killed herself (*Hindustan Times* and *The Times of India*, November 17, 1984).

After the Janata Party's victory in 1977, Morarji Desai became Prime Minister. During his two-and-a-half-year tenure, his son Kantilal Desai was involved in several dealings, one of which concerned this flat. The flat was on the fifth floor of a large building called Oceana on Marine Drive in Bombay. After the Janata government fell, a case was filed in court claiming that Mr. Kantilal Desai had

acquired the flat illegally. The court ruled against him. Mrs. Padma Desai received this news over the phone. Soon after, she jumped to her death.

She thought that by killing herself she was freeing herself forever from the court's decision. But if she had realized that by committing suicide she was actually stepping into a greater court—where no such option would remain—her decision would have been very different.

A person's greatest weakness is impatience. In haste, he takes a drastic step. Yet if he paused to think, he would never do so.

THE SECRET OF LIFE

Bill Cosby, an African-American, was born in 1937 into a poor family. In the beginning, he barely earned a thousand dollars a year. Today, his annual income has reached several million dollars. How did a black man achieve such extraordinary success in white-dominated America? The answer lies in education and his determination to achieve success.

When Bill Cosby was in fifth grade at a school in Philadelphia, he often fooled around and paid little attention to studies. One day, his teacher, Miss Nagle, told him: "Even if you want to be a joker, you still need higher education. Without education, you cannot succeed in any field." (*Span*, January 1987)

Bill Cosby took her advice seriously. He began working hard in his studies until he eventually earned a doctorate in education. Later, he started performing in entertainment programs, which led to television opportunities. Today, he is one of the most famous comedians in America. The Bill Cosby Show became the most expensive program on American television. Unlike many other black comedians, he avoided racial themes. Instead, he based his stories on universal experiences that everyone could relate to:

“Unlike many other black comedians, he avoided racial nuances and drew his stories from the kind of universal occurrences that could be understood by all.” (*Span*, January 1987)

Generally, Americans do not favour black people. Yet they watched Bill Cosby’s programs with great enthusiasm. Since he showed respect for white audiences, they in turn showed respect for him. If you want others to take interest in you, begin by taking interest in them. After that, you will have no complaints.

HUMAN GREATNESS

This is the story of the famous theoretical scientist Stephen Hawking (1942–2018). After completing his master’s degree, while pursuing Ph.D. research, he was struck by a serious illness. He described his condition in

these words:

“I was a research student desperately looking for a problem with which to complete my Ph.D thesis. Two years before I had been diagnosed as suffering from ALS, commonly known as Lou Gehrig’s disease, or motor neuron disease, and found out that I had only one or two more years to live. In these circumstances there had not seemed much point in working on my Ph.D. I did not expect to survive that long. Yet two years had gone by and I was not that much worse. In fact, things were going rather well for me.” (Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, p. 53)

Contrary to the doctors’ predictions, Stephen Hawking lived on. He completed his education and, through hard work, developed such brilliance that many consider him the greatest theoretical physicist after Einstein. He became a professor of mathematics at Cambridge University, a chair given only to the most distinguished scientists. When his book *A Brief History of Time* was published in 1988, it became so popular that fourteen editions were printed in the very first year.

A person’s mental abilities compensate for all his weaknesses. His determination helps him overcome every obstacle. After each failure, he finds for himself a new path to success.

THE LESSON OF THE OWL

The owl is often thought of as a symbol of bad luck and stupidity. Many people consider it useless and kill it. But in truth, nothing in God's creation is without purpose. Owls are actually very helpful for our farms and crops because they eat the insects that destroy harvests. Their diet consists mainly of harmful insects and pests. In this way, an owl is better than many people who, driven by greed and hunger for power, harm others and destroy useful things in the name of victory.

Scientists have identified 130 species of owls. They can weigh anywhere from four ounces to six pounds. Naturally, their food intake depends on their size. Small owls eat about seven ounces a day, while large owls can eat more than two pounds. They usually hunt at night, catching big insects, rats, lizards, snakes, small rabbits, and other creatures, most of which are harmful to crops or humans.

The owl's body is designed perfectly for hunting. As one bird expert put it, it has the ability to fly silently at night. In darkness, it can locate prey simply by sound, and then swoops quickly and quietly to capture and swallow it (*Hindustan Times*, September 9, 1989).

Nothing in God's world is useless. Everything has its place and wisdom behind it. Even an owl is part of this balance. By contrast, people who live in such a way that they lose all usefulness to others, who add nothing of value to the larger

system of life, and instead become harmful to society—such people are, in God’s eyes, worth even less than an owl. Neither God nor people have any need for them.

EVEN AFTER LOSING

A report from A.P. (London) was published as follows: Mr. Stanley Jaki was born in Hungary. He is a Benedictine monk, a Christian theologian, and a professor of physics. He said that losing his voice for ten years became the means of earning \$220,000 through his writings on science and religion. “A surgical mishap on my throat in 1953 gave me time to write and to think—and that’s not always the case. Many writers of best-sellers don’t think at all,” he said. Mr. Jaki, who won the Templeton Prize for progress in religion, believes that Christianity created the intellectual climate that allowed science to flourish. He is a strong critic of the view that science and God are unrelated. (*The Times of India*, New Delhi, May 14, 1987).

Mr. Jaki suffered an accident in which a faulty operation robbed him of his voice. Yet his ability to think and read remained. He made full use of those remaining abilities. Through ten years of silent effort, he wrote a book that earned him a prize of \$220,000. Those who dwell on

what they have lost after misfortune only deepen their ruin, while those who focus on what remains to them can rebuild and reach success again.

UNDERESTIMATING OTHERS

Life is about accepting unpleasant experiences with grace. Theodore Roosevelt expressed this truth in these words: “The poorest way to face life is to face it with a sneer.”

The fact is that no one lives in this world alone; countless others share the same opportunity of life. According to God’s plan, every person is provided with the means to live—each in a different way. One receives one kind of provision, another receives something else. In such a situation, if a person begins to look down on others, he loses the ability to see reality clearly. He can form a correct opinion neither about himself nor about others.

The greatest wrong committed in human history is the failure to acknowledge truth. In every age, righteous individuals have risen with a message of truth, calling people toward what is right. Yet time and again, most of their listeners ignored them. The main reason was that they regarded those truthful people as insignificant—simply because they lacked worldly grandeur or were not seated on thrones of power. They said, “Why should we humble ourselves before such ordinary men?”

The same principle applies to national behaviour. If we consider another nation inferior, our entire perspective becomes distorted. We begin to see its virtues as flaws, misjudge its strength, and end up clashing with it unnecessarily, when wisdom would have required restraint. To underestimate others is, in the end, to underestimate oneself. The final outcome of belittling others is that one becomes small and insignificant in others' eyes.

FOCUS OF MIND

Charles Darwin (1809–1882) is one of the most famous thinkers of modern times. Although the writer of these lines does not agree with his theory, it is still true that no other thinker has shaped modern thought as much as Darwin.

Darwin earned his extraordinary place through extraordinary effort. *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1984) describes him like this:

“All his mental energy was focused on his subject, and that was why poetry, pictures, and music ceased in his mature life to afford him the pleasure that they had given him in his earlier days.” (Vol. 5, p. 495)

Darwin devoted all his mental focus to his field of study; as a result, poetry, art, and music no longer brought him the joy they once did.

Such concentration is essential for great success, whether in a good cause or a bad one. Until a person becomes so absorbed in their goal that everything else fades away—until nothing else gives them pleasure—they cannot achieve anything great. All great people have worked in this way. There is no other method for doing great work.

When a person is fully absorbed in a task, its hidden secrets are revealed to them. Only then can they pay attention to every necessary detail. Only then can all their natural abilities come together for that one purpose. Without focus and dedication, no great success is possible. Most people do not work with complete concentration—and that is why most people never achieve greatness.

NATURE'S JUDGMENT

If you travel from America into Canada, you will see both nations' flags flying side by side at the border. Nearby, a large board is displayed with these words:

“Children of a common mother.”

What is written openly at the US–Canada border is, in fact, written in invisible letters on the borders of every nation. The first sign is made by human hands; the second is set by God.

Modern research in molecular biology, through genetic evidence, has shown scientifically that all people in the

world belong to one great family. We all come from the same common ancestors (For elaboration, see the author's book *Tameer ki Taraf*, pp. 28-30).

So the truth is exactly what is declared on that board at the US–Canada border. This is the reality for all nations, though only America and Canada have said it out loud. Biological fact requires that every nation write the same words at its own borders.

This is the true test of human life in the present world. Here, a person must use his free will to do consciously what nature has already ordained through its immutable laws. What nature has written with its invisible pen, man must inscribe with his own hand upon the page of his life. In other words, both thought and action must be brought into harmony with nature's design. To live in harmony with this design is to move toward progress; to go against it is to move toward destruction.

GREAT PROGRESS

Psychologists divide human thought into two types: convergent thinking and divergent thinking. Convergent thinking means the mind sticks to one line only. A person may see one fact but fails to grasp another. This is uncreative thinking.

Divergent thinking is different. It means the mind can shift from one angle to another. A person sees one fact, and then their mind turns to another. This is also called creative thinking. (January 24, 1989)

For example, a man went to a town to buy shoes. The population was large, but there was no shoe shop. One kind of person notices only that no shoe shop exists there. That is convergent thinking. Another kind of person, faced with the same fact, thinks: here are many customers for shoes, but no shop to serve them. If a shoe shop is opened, it will do very well. He then opens one and makes a great profit.

The second man had divergent thinking. He saw the opportunity for business in the absence of one.

Divergent thinking is a quality of creative people. Creativity is the most important condition for progress. Scientific discoveries are made by those who have creative minds. Great political achievements are carried out by those with creative vision. Commercial success is reached by those who can think creatively.

In this world, success goes to those who discover the secret of turning loss into gain.

TICKET TO SUCCESS

In today's world, the surest way to succeed is through education. Those who have discovered this truth are benefiting greatly.

In the United States, an annual educational competition is held in which students from across the country take part. From this contest, the top six science students are chosen. In 1987, when the six most outstanding American students were selected, the name of an Indian girl, Keshani Bhushan, was also included. She was awarded a scholarship of one thousand dollars a month from Mary Baldwin College (*Hindustan Times*, 30 August 1987).

On March 21, 1988, newspapers in Delhi reported a story. *The Indian Express* ran it under the headline:

Indian Boy Tops in US Science Competition

In America, many kinds of science competitions are held. One of the most prestigious is the Westinghouse Science Talent Search. In 1988, its 47th annual contest was held. The student who came first was an Indian student named Chetan Nayak. He was awarded a yearly scholarship of 20,000 dollars so that he could continue his higher studies. In the past, five winners of the Westinghouse competition later went on to receive the Nobel Prize.

Education today is truly a ticket to success. The degree system of education has brought this ladder of success right to everyone's doorstep. To benefit from it, only one thing is needed: hard work. If a person combines effort with wisdom, they can achieve the highest success anywhere—whether in America, India, or any other country.

DISCOVERY

Discovery is a remarkable human achievement. To uncover something new is regarded as a person's greatest accomplishment. In every period of history, those who added something new to human knowledge have been honoured and respected.

What is discovery, and how does someone arrive at it? Albert Szent-Györgyi (1893–1986), who won the Nobel Prize for his work in science, gave a meaningful answer. He said:

“Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought.”

A famous example of this is Newton's story. Newton saw an apple fall from a tree. Everyone knows that fruit falls from trees—everyone has seen it happen. But when Newton looked at this ordinary event with deeper thought, he discovered something extraordinary in it: the laws of gravity. In what everyone else had seen, he found what no one else had noticed.

This discovery is the foundation of all great achievements. The person who reaches true success is someone who creates something new. The nation that gains dominance over others is the one able to develop innovations before them. Those who lack this creative ability remain in the back ranks; they never advance to the front.

THE MIRACLE OF SERVICE

In the English fortnightly *India Today* (15 August 1990), page 68 featured a thought-provoking incident.

Mohammad Hanif Sulaiman, 35, is a Muslim barber from Lucknow. For the past ten years, he has been cutting Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav's hair. Initially, Mr. Yadav was only a political leader, but now he has become the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh.

One day, Mohammad Hanif Sulaiman told him, "You have achieved a high position. Please help me get a shop in Hazratganj Bazaar, Lucknow." Mr. Yadav agreed, but later forgot his promise. Sulaiman waited patiently for a few months and then stopped visiting the Chief Minister's residence. When Mr. Yadav inquired about this, he learned that Sulaiman was upset over the broken promise and had therefore withdrawn.

When Mr. Yadav realized this, he directed his officials to find a shop for Sulaiman in Hazratganj. After extensive searching, they discovered that no shops were available in the area. However, the Power Department of the Lucknow Development Authority had an office in Hazratganj. By Mr. Yadav's order, this office was vacated and given to Suleman so he could open his shop there.

According to the reporter, at that time, 1,250 people were waiting outside shops in Hazratganj. However, Sulaiman

jumped ahead of them all and, in just a day, bought a shop in Lucknow's most prominent market—worth about five lakh rupees then. He then started his business there under a signboard that read: Bombay Hair Dressers.

In response to a reporter's question, Sulaiman stated: "I deserved this much for all my *seva* (service)."

SHAPING THE MIND

One of the key points mentioned in the constitution of the United Nations Economic and Cultural Organization is:

"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed." (*The UNESCO Courier*, Jul-Aug 1966, p 6)

This is an accurate and insightful statement. The reality is that whether it's a dispute between two people on the street or a confrontation between two nations on the battlefield, all such conflicts start in the mind. Negative emotions like anger, provocation, revenge, and hatred take root in some individuals' mind. When these emotions grow and manifest in action, they lead to disputes or wars. Therefore, if peace can be established in the mind, it can also be realized in the world.

Negative thoughts in a person's mind are always reactions. If someone says something harsh, you become angry. If you experience something unpleasant, you become agitated. If your dignity is insulted, revenge sparks within you. These very reactions, which begin in the mind, ultimately lead to conflict and violence.

In this context, the only effective way to prevent both personal disputes and larger-scale wars is through the education of people's minds. People must be trained in the mindset that religion refers to as patience. This can be achieved when negative thoughts are replaced with positive ones. People should learn not to be provoked by inflammatory words. Instead of engaging with unpleasant things, they should learn to avoid them. They should respond to hatred with love, and make decisions based on calm reflection rather than emotional turmoil.

The reform of the mind leads to the reform of action, and the building of the mind is the building of life.

AN UNAVOIDABLE REALITY

Anne Brontë, the English novelist (1820–1849), wrote with realism. One of her sayings is:

“There is always a ‘but’ in this imperfect world.”

This is a wise truth. The world was created as a place of testing, so perfection cannot exist here. There are many

limitations. Every person has freedom of thought and action. Conflicts of interest constantly arise. A smooth life is impossible. Everyone encounters a “but.”

It is therefore essential to keep this fact in mind in all our actions, or else we will end in failure. You may drive your car fast on the road, but you cannot stop oncoming traffic to keep it clear for yourself. You may quarrel with an unwanted procession, but you cannot stop the police from intervening afterwards. You may hold rallies and protests for a national cause, but you cannot prevent the other side from reacting. You may raise a storm of protests in the name of injustice, but you cannot change the law of life that says: a person receives only as much as they have prepared themselves for.

In this world, an obstacle of ‘but’ exists in every direction. Recognize these obstacles, and plan your actions with them in mind. If you ignore them, the end can only be disaster.

A LESSON FROM NATURE

Teach is a type of timber used in construction. The largest producer of teak is Burma, followed by India, Thailand, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. In India, it has been used for about two thousand years.

The most important quality of teak, according to an expert, is its extraordinary durability. Even in buildings thousands of years old, beams made of teak are found to be

in excellent condition. In ancient times, ships, bridges, and other structures were often constructed from this wood.

The reason teak lasts so long is that, unlike ordinary wood, it is not attacked by termites. Termites destroy wood, but teak is free of this threat, so its durability is unmatched.

What protects teak from termites? The answer is simple: teak contains a bitter taste that termites dislike. Since termites feed on wood but do not like the taste of teak, they leave it alone. This shows us nature's method. To protect teak from termites, nature did not give it noise or protest. Instead, it gave teak an inner quality that naturally keeps termites away.

Just as termites are the enemy of wood in this world, people also have enemies among themselves. So, what should a person do to protect themselves from these enemies? They must develop a positive quality within themselves that naturally causes their enemies to stay away. The enemy should, on their own, refrain from taking any action against them.

THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

One rule of geometry says: "A straight line is the shortest distance between two points."

This is perfectly true for light, because experiments show that light always travels in straight lines. But if someone

tries to apply this principle to the journey of human life, their path will only lead to confusion.

If you set out from home determined to walk in a perfectly straight line until you reach your destination, you may fall into a pit, crash into a mountain, or drown in a river. That is why no sensible traveler does this. Every wise traveler decides their route according to the terrain, not by geometry.

In the present time, Muslims across the world are engaged in a struggle against the assumed enemies of Islam. As they embark on their journey of life, they feel that certain nations, like rivers and mountains, stand in their way. They immediately declare jihad against these nations.

This approach is like trying to travel in a straight line. Such efforts can never succeed. They are not acts of life but of destruction.

The journey of life is not traveled by geometric rules. It requires adjusting to favourable and unfavourable conditions. The realistic plan for life is the one that fully takes account of external circumstances—and only such a plan succeeds in this world.

IMAGINARY FEAR

Hypochondriasis is a psychological disorder in which a person, despite being healthy, becomes convinced that they are ill. Those affected by this disorder may believe

they are suffering from diseases, even though these diseases do not actually exist.

“The hypochondriac may become convinced that diseases exist, even though they are absent.” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 5, p. 257)

On July 28, 1992, in Pune, I had the opportunity to meet a gentleman named Mr. Farhat Haroon Khan, who shared an incident from 1971. He had met a 20-year-old Arab student named Mohammad Abdul Ghafar from Bahrain, who was studying in Pune. The young man had become convinced that eating Indian food had ruined his health and that he was suffering from a fatal disease.

He asked Mr. Khan to take him to a good doctor. Mr. Khan brought him to Dr. S. M. H. Modi. The doctor examined him and carried out various tests. A few days later, he told Mr. Farhat to inform him that he was not ill and that he was as fit as a horse.

As soon as Abdul Ghafar heard the doctor's words, all his anxiety disappeared. He began living normally again, as though he had never been ill.

This kind of illness is not limited to individuals. Sometimes, an entire nation can also be affected by this psychological condition. Misguided leaders may make them believe they are surrounded by dangers on all sides. The secret of such a nation's progress is to free it from this imaginary fear. Once that happens, it can move forward toward real progress.

AN EXAMPLE

A report on the Malegaon riots was published in a Delhi-based Urdu monthly, *Afkar-e-Milli*, in September 1992.. A summary of that report is given here in its own words:

“On 19 July 1992, communal riots erupted in Malegaon. Property worth 30 million rupees was either looted or set on fire. Three Muslims lost their lives. More than 135 people were injured and are being treated in hospitals. Because businesses have shut down, the neighborhoods—mostly Muslim—look filled with despair and gloom. The working class fears starvation, while traders are stuck in financial troubles.

On 19 July, Muslims had decided to close their shops and businesses to show anger over the Babri Masjid issue. As part of the ‘Save Babri Masjid’ movement, local Janata Dal MLA Mr. Nihal Ahmad formed a committee for the mosque’s protection. On the night of 18 July, he held a public meeting on Kidwai Road and announced that Malegaon would remain closed on 19 July, along with a protest march. Muslims generally welcomed this plan warmly. This became the starting point of the tension in the city.

The next day, a march of 25–30 thousand people, led by Mr. Nihal Ahmad, set out from near the fort. But before

it could even reach Mawsam Pul, it turned chaotic. It is said that a non-Muslim photographer kept taking pictures despite requests from some Muslims to stop. When someone tried to snatch his camera, the police arrived to calm the situation. But some people in the crowd began throwing stones, and from there the terrible cycle of action and reaction began.”

If tolerant people take out a procession, it is called a demonstration. If intolerant people do it, it is called a riot.

THE OUTCOME OF ANGER

In Delhi’s Karol Bagh area, on Ajmal Khan Road, there were two shoe shops side by side. One was owned by Surinder Kumar (35), and the other by Balraj Arora (45). A week earlier, a man had bought a pair of shoes from Surinder Kumar’s shop for 180 rupees. As he stepped outside, the other shopkeeper, Balraj Arora, called him over, looked at the shoes, and asked how much he had paid. The customer said 180 rupees. Arora then showed the same type of shoe from his own shop and said: “Look, this is the same shoe, and I can give it to you for only 135 rupees” (*The Pioneer*, 14 October 1992).

The customer became angry. He went back to Surinder Kumar and demanded a refund of 45 rupees. Surinder Kumar got upset, went to the neighbouring shop, and

scolded Arora. Some bystanders intervened and sent both men back to their shops. But the anger remained. A week later, on 13 October 1992, Surinder Kumar argued again with Arora. Finally, he pulled out a revolver (32 bore Smith & Wesson) and fired six bullets at him. Arora was rushed to Lohia Hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

Now the case is in court. Either the killer will be hanged like his victim, or he will spend huge sums of money to twist the case in his favour and get acquitted. In one case, it is physical death; in the other, financial ruin.

If the killer had not been blinded by anger and revenge, he could easily have seen that the better choice was to return 45 rupees to the customer and settle the matter with his competitor in a professional way.

WHAT IS THE CAUSE?

In July–August 1992, the Olympic Games were held in Barcelona, Spain. A total of 171 countries took part. Out of them, 64 countries performed well in different sports and won medals.

India, a country of 860 million people, could not win a single medal—not gold, not silver, not even bronze. Even in archery, a traditional Indian sport, other nations outperformed India. The top ten countries in the medal tally were: The Unified Team—a joint team consisting of twelve of the fifteen former Soviet republics, the USA,

Germany, China, Spain, Hungary, South Korea, Cuba, France, and Australia.

This is not an isolated case. Those who travel abroad or follow global developments know that, at the international level, India's presence is relatively limited. For example, it does not figure prominently among the leading industrial nations. In modern scientific research, its contribution is often not widely recognized. Similarly, in terms of quality, many of its educational institutions are placed among the lower ranks.

What is the reason for this backwardness? One observer explained it in these words: people's minds are lost in trivial matters. They do not focus on the truly important issues of the time:

“Men's minds are lost in trivialities, and not attuned to the challenging issues of the time.”

Whether it is an individual or a nation, the secret of progress in this world is to ignore small matters and concentrate only on issues that truly shape the future. Indians have not learned this difference. That is why, despite half a century of upheavals, they have made no significant progress.

A STEP BEYOND THE JOB

Wing Commander Muhammad Yusuf Khan (born 1943) is a pilot by profession. In addition to this, he has a passion for journalism and regularly contributes

to English newspapers. His articles have been published in national dailies here. I had the opportunity to meet him on December 3, 1992, in Delhi, where I learned many insightful stories from his experiences.

Currently, he serves as a senior pilot at Indian Metal & Ferro Alloys Ltd. (IMFA), with its head office in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Recently, one of his articles was published in *Hindustan Times* (October 18, 1992), titled “Can You Leave Them to the Teacher?”, which discussed children’s education.

Another of his articles was published in *Panorama* (October 4, 1992), titled “A Week in Orissa”, which focused on tourism.

When the company executives learned of these articles, they were very pleased. The management displayed the articles on the office notice board and sent photocopies to various company branches. After the publication of these articles, Yusuf Khan’s reputation grew within the company. Mr. Pashine, the General Manager of Human Resource Development, remarked, “We are proud that you write for the newspapers. We would like all our employees to know that we have a person of this caliber who writes for the national dailies.”

If you want respect among people, serve them—become a source of pride for them.

A SABOTAGE PLAN

Former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated in Madras on 21 May 1991. The killers were the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) from Sri Lanka. Their planning was so thorough that it seemed they would never be caught. Yet on 20 August 1991, police traced the mastermind, 23-year-old Sivarasan, to a house near Bangalore. Seeing the heavy police presence, Sivarasan and his associates swallowed cyanide and killed themselves.

The reason Sivarasan was caught lay in one “mistake.” On 21 May, when he arrived at the rally venue with his team, he had disguised himself as a press reporter. To make the disguise look real, he had brought along a local photographer, Hari Babu.

Hari Babu was only a hired hand and was kept unaware of the real plan. He took several pictures of Rajiv Gandhi from different angles. In one of them, Sivarasan’s face was also captured. When the bomb exploded, killing Rajiv Gandhi, Hari Babu too was among those killed. Sivarasan escaped, but his photographer’s camera fell into police hands. From it, they got Sivarasan’s photo, printed it in newspapers, and announced a reward of one million rupees for anyone providing information. A milk seller near Bangalore, who used to deliver milk to Sivarasan daily, recognized him from the photo. Acting on her tip, police raided the house on the outskirts of Bangalore (*The Times of India*, 21 August 1991).

A destructive event depends on many factors to succeed. Due to human limitations, it's impossible to control all of them. Every destructive plan has a flaw, and it is this flaw that leads to the scheme's failure.

THE BIG STORY

Time International is a famous weekly magazine published in the United States. Each issue features a special article, displayed prominently on the front page and known as the cover story. In the June 8, 1992, issue of *Time*, on page 2 under the section titled "From the Publisher," there's a half-page note. It explains that writing a cover story for the *Time* is regarded as writing the big story, a goal every journalist dreams of:

"Every journalist dreams of working on the big story."

For journalists, writing the big story or reporting on a major event is a dream—a source of personal joy. *Time* reporter Ed Magnuson described it as "real pleasure."

But there is another class of people who write the big story not for personal joy, but for self-display. They want to write the big story so that their own names shine brighter than others. This is the class of leaders.

It is not objectionable if a journalist writes the big story for his personal joy. But when a leader does it for self-

promotion, it becomes harmful. A leader speaks the language of national development, but his real aim is to highlight himself. That is why leaders always make grand speeches—so that their names appear more often, and crowds gather around them. But this kind of leadership is poison for nation-building. True nation-building always comes from working on the “small stories.” Leaders, by nature, only chase the “big story.” The result is that the leader’s image shines, but the nation does not progress.

THE SPIRIT OF REFORM

I once met a young Muslim man who worked as a scribe (a professional Urdu copyist for printing). He told me, “I read *Al-Risala* regularly and I like it very much. But one thing bothers me. You often mention the shortcomings of Muslims. Doesn’t this create an inferiority complex among them?”

I said that you are a scribe. Suppose you do not draw the correct circle for the two letters *jeem* (ج) and *ain* (ع). Now, if your teacher points out this mistake, would you say that the teacher is instilling a sense of inferiority in you? He said, no. I replied, that through this personal example, you can understand the articles of *Al-Risala*. The truth is that the purpose of these articles is not to create a sense of inferiority among Muslims, but to encourage

self-improvement in them. And it is a well-known fact that without correcting one's flaws, no individual or group can progress in this world.

There is an Arabic saying: "The one who advises you is better for you than the one who praises you" (*man huwa nasihuka khayrun laka mimman huwa madhihuka*). This saying is absolutely true. Anyone who truly wishes well for someone will point out his faults and correct his mistakes. This is the way of a genuine reformer.

The Quran says that to avoid loss (*khusr*), one of the essential qualities is to encourage one another to truth and to patience (*tawasi bil-haqq and tawasi bis-sabr*). That is, believers must keep advising one another about truth and patience. Only that community can escape failure and ruin whose members have this living spirit: when they see a brother straying from the path of truth, they correct him, and when they see him losing patience, they remind him of its importance (*Quran*, Chapter:103).

Among the Companions of the Prophet, the spirit of giving advice—and of accepting advice—was fully alive. Once, Caliph Umar gave a judgment in a case. Ali felt the decision was wrong and objected. Even though Umar was the ruler, he immediately accepted Ali's correction and said: "If it were not for Ali, Umar would have perished" (*Lawla Aliyyun lahalaka Umar; Al-Isti'ab fi Ma'rifat al-As-hab*, Vol. 3, p. 1103).

BETTER GOVERNANCE

“**W**hat has been your greatest difficulty since Independence?” This was a question the French writer André Malraux once asked Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru replied: “Creating a just state by just means.”

Nehru held complete power in India. Yet even he felt helpless when it came to building a better system of governance. The reason is that good governance is not created by state power. It is brought about by those who work outside government for this purpose. The truth is, building a better system of government begins with building better people.

The way to do this is for some individuals to dedicate themselves purely to constructive efforts, shaping minds. Through speeches, writings, and all possible means, they must try to reach individuals one by one.

This work must continue quietly and peacefully over a long period. It is like nurturing a kind of constructive energy beneath the surface. When this intellectual energy matures within a significant number of individuals and brings about a transformation in their lives, it eventually leads to change in society. And once society is reformed, a reformed system of governance naturally follows.

Change at the individual level leads to change in society, and change in society leads to change in governance. This is because, in a democratic system, the government emerges

from within society itself. Nurturing this constructive process is a deeply quiet task. It demands sustained effort, yet often receives little recognition. It is like being buried in the foundation so that the dome of the nation may stand tall. It is precisely the demanding nature of this work that makes people hesitant to commit themselves to it.

CORRECT ADVICE

In his speech on the 46th Independence Day, the then Prime Minister Narasimha Rao made an important point. Many newspapers highlighted this in their headlines. *Hindustan Times* (August 16, 1992) reported his speech with the headline: PM for three-year moratorium on contentious issues.

The Prime Minister said that there are many differences among us, and it is natural for such differences to exist. But what is more important is that, even after almost half a century of independence, we are still surrounded by serious problems. To address these issues, a clear and focused approach is needed. At the very least, for the next three years, we should set aside our disputes and devote all our energy to putting the country on the path of progress. This is the only principle of development and success in the world. In today's world, it is inevitable that one person and another—or one group and another—will have

differences and conflicts. A life without disagreements is not possible.

If every person and every group keeps clashing with others over disputes, progress will become impossible. The right approach, therefore, is to set aside disagreements and contentious matters, and direct all our energy toward practical work and development. If permanent avoidance is not possible, then at least for some time, there is no choice but to adopt this principle of restraint.

A person cannot spend their strength on two fronts at the same time. If they become entangled in disputes, constructive work will stop. And if they focus on constructive work, the field of conflict will have to be left empty. In such a situation, what is wisdom? Wisdom is to abandon or postpone disputes and direct all possible energy toward construction and progress.

GREAT VISION

L yndon B. Johnson (1908-1973) was the 36th President of the United States. He was born in 1908 and passed away in 1973. He wanted to make America a Great Society. To achieve this, he implemented various measures, one of which was a change in the immigration law.

Johnson placed the greatest importance on knowledge and education. He said that the most fundamental aspect of our

hopes for America's future is knowledge:

“Learning is basic to our hopes for America.”

America welcomes foreign minds. However, before Johnson, there was an obstacle in this regard. There were lenient laws for the entry of white experts into America, but there were stringent rules for the entry of Black experts. As a result, America couldn't fully utilize Black experts in its developmental process.

After coming to power, Lyndon Johnson changed the U.S. Immigration law in 1965. He removed all legal restrictions on the entry of Black individuals. He said, “We need their skills and not their skins.”

This is an example that illustrates what a person must do to achieve great progress in this world. That is, one must look at people's abilities and disregard all other aspects. Those who are distracted by other aspects can never gather talented individuals around them.

For great success, great vision is required. The principle of success in this world can be summed up in one word: The greater the vision, the greater the success.

WHY THE DIFFERENCE

In 1971, during a journey, I stayed at a gentleman's house in Lahore, Pakistan. It was a large two-storey building. One night, my host took me up to the roof. The full moon

was shining brightly in the sky, looking very beautiful in the open air. We were lost in the beauty of the scene when suddenly my host said: "That same moon must be shining in your country too." We both fell silent. I thought to myself: how strange this is. The moon is the same in every country. But human beings are not the same everywhere. A person is regarded as a "citizen" in his own country, but as a "foreigner" in another.

The moon is welcomed in every land. The sun is admired everywhere. But man's condition is different: someone valued in one country becomes unwanted in another. Why is that? The reason is that the sun and moon remain true to their nature, while man does not.

The sun and moon never spread light in one place and darkness in another. But people are friends to some nations and enemies to others. A flower cannot give fragrance to one and foul smell to another. But a human being is kind to one and hostile to another. Stars move in their orbits without ever colliding. But man intrudes into the space of others. A tree grows by the same rule in every country. But man deals justly with some and unjustly with others.

Other things are admired because they stay true to their nature. But man loses his own nature and, as a result, becomes unwelcome. If he were to stay true to it, he would be welcomed everywhere, just like the sun and moon.

ACTION AND RESULT

The cover story of *Time* magazine (December 23, 1991) was about the collapse of the Soviet Union. It included an exclusive interview with former Soviet President Gorbachev titled “A Man without a Country.”

In the January 13, 1992, issue of *Time*, readers’ reactions were published. One reader wrote that the epitaph on Gorbachev’s grave might read something like this:

Here lies a good man and an idealist who abolished repression and tyranny in the Soviet Union, not realizing that they were the glue holding the empire together. (George Podzamsky, Berwyn, Illinois)

This observation was absolutely right. The lesson here is that the outcome of an action does not follow from one’s wishes but from external realities.

Whatever Gorbachev’s step may have been, the lesson is extremely important: whether it is an individual or a nation, they must realize that while taking action is within their control, the outcome is not. The result depends on many external factors. If those factors are favourable, the result will be positive. If not, no favourable outcome can follow.

The result of an action is shaped not by desire but by historical facts. This law is so decisive that not even a superpower can change it. External realities always prevail, whether we like them or not.

WAR AND PEACE

The May 1991 issue of *Al-Risala* was published as “Khaleej Diary.” On February 2, 1991, I wrote in my diary: in this war, no matter which side claims victory, the suffering of ordinary people will increase enormously. These hardships will spread worldwide, even to the country that wins.

A month later, when the cease-fire was declared, that is exactly what happened. The war ended, but the problems did not. *Time* magazine (April 15, 1991) published a detailed report showing how, despite victory, new problems had arisen:

“America and its allies confront a new dilemma.”
(p.18)

In the May 6, 1991 issue, *Time* published readers’ letters. One American wrote:

“It looks like Bush has won the battle..... and lost the war in the Gulf.” (Lloyd Ringquist, Marshfield, Wisconsin)

War only creates destruction. It cannot bring construction. A battle may be won on the field, but in real life outside the battlefield, victory brings no joy. Why then do people rush toward war? Because war looks impressive, while in truth peace is greater and war is smaller. If people understood this, everyone would run toward peaceful construction, and the battlefield would be empty forever.

War may be called heroism, but it has no positive outcome. Peace may seem like nothing, but in reality all the greatest achievements come only through peace.

ONE EVENT, TWO OUTCOMES

Jamil Akhtar Khan, a reader of my books, is working in a city in Saudi Arabia. In a letter dated January 24, 1992, he described an incident he personally witnessed:

This incident, in his own words, is as follows:

“It was an evening in July 1991. The call to prayer for Maghrib had already been made. I was leaving my room. Outside the gate, a few boys were seen teasing a passersby. When they saw me, the boys rushed toward me. One of them was holding a wild animal, resembling a rabbit. They kept trying to scare me. One even wanted to throw an iron rod at my shoulder and watch the spectacle. I sensed that if I engaged with them, things would go wrong. So, I decided that, no matter what foolishness they did, I would not react. I walked quickly toward the mosque. Seeing my indifference, the boys left me alone, and I reached the mosque safely. After finishing my prayer, when I was returning to my room, I encountered another scene. The same boys were now fighting with a Pakistani Muslim. They had thrown the wild animal on his body, and he became furious. He hit one of the boys. This was

where the trouble started. As a result, a dozen boys pounced on him. Some were hitting his head, others were pounding his back. One grabbed both his arms from behind, while another twisted his chest. Whenever he managed to break free from one, another would latch onto him. They beat him mercilessly. Who would have dared intervene and risk their own trouble? Eventually, a Saudi passing by stopped his car, felt pity, and intervened to stop the fight. That man must have spent several days in bed with injuries and sorrow.”

In the same situation, one person’s ‘ignore it’ policy left him unharmed, while the other’s impatience led to trouble. The one who ignored the situation could have simply walked a few steps briskly and reached his room. Instead, he reached his room later, but exhausted and injured. I thought to myself: if impatience could lead to such consequences in an individual matter, how much more dangerous could it be in a collective situation?”

THE NEED TO PAY THE PRICE

At the airport, there was an automatic weighing machine. By inserting one rupee, it printed a ticket showing a person’s weight.

A child stood on it with a one-rupee coin. He dropped the coin into the slot. After a clicking sound, a card appeared with his weight printed on it.

The child found it amusing, like a game. He asked his parents for more coins. He repeated it again and again. Each time, a card came out. Eventually, his parents ran out of one-rupee coins. They only had a fifty-paisa coin left. The child put it in. The machine clicked, but no card came out. When nothing appeared, the child began to cry.

The young child couldn't understand why. But in reality, it wasn't a matter for tears, but for learning. In its silent way, the machine gave an important lesson: everything has a price. If you don't pay the full price, you won't get what you want—even if you pay something less.

This law applies both in this world and in the hereafter. In both, a person can only get something by paying the full price according to the rule. Whoever refuses to pay cannot expect to receive what he desires.

This principle of paying the price is an unchanging law. Neither wishful thinking can alter it, nor can it be set aside through protest or complaint.

THE POWER OF CONSTRUCTION

The period from the Second World War to 1991 was the era of dominance of the United States and the Soviet Union. These two powers came to be known as superpowers because they were the only countries that possessed the largest number of atomic bombs. The possession of these nuclear weapons made them superpowers.

However, research showed that despite their immense power, nuclear weapons were impractical for actual use. Ancient weapons like swords caused limited destruction, but nuclear bombs bring about unlimited devastation. If ever employed, they would wipe out the entire world, annihilating both the defeated and the victors. This made their use unthinkable.

The production of nuclear weapons and modern arms dealt severe economic blows to both America and the Soviet Union. America's economy became hollow. For example, at that time, America owed Japan more than 40 billion dollars. The Soviet economy collapsed completely, leading to the fall of its empire.

From 1992, a new phase of history began. As *Time* magazine (February 10, 1992) put it:

“This is becoming a familiar line: ‘The Cold War is over, and Japan won.’ Much of the rationale for America’s global military role is gone, and the U.S. must now find a new place in a complex world economy... America, still the most powerful economy, nonetheless feels itself to be somehow the diminished thing.” (p.9)

In times of war, the nation with destructive power seems to lead the world. But in times of peace, the nation that can offer peace leads the world.

TWO KINDS OF LEADERS

Gilbert Keith Chesterton, an English writer born in London in 1874 and died in 1936, said:

“There is a great man who makes every man feel small. But the real great man is the man who makes every man feel great.”

There are two types of leaders. The first take up big issues, use grand slogans, and always speak in a high-profile way. They are noticed everywhere, talked about everywhere, and welcomed on every platform. Their personalities shine, and they make others feel small. These leaders become highly visible, but the people gain no real benefit.

The second kind are those who truly want to help ordinary people. They carry the pain of others in their hearts. Their nature leads them to work that may not seem big but is deeply useful. Their work does not make headlines, nor does it bring them praise.

Such a leader's actions do not gain personal fame, but they elevate every individual in the nation. He makes each person a hero within their own sphere and boosts every person's character, thereby lifting the entire nation.

Those who are drawn to greatness may admire leaders of the first kind, but the true well-wishers of humanity are the leaders of the second kind. They make themselves small so that others may grow. They place themselves in the foundation so that others may rise like tall towers. By setting aside their own prominence, they create opportunities for others to flourish.

LIVING NATION, DEAD NATION

By nature, human beings feel compelled to give greatness to someone. This is part of human psychology. If a person regards God as great, he is a monotheist. If he regards anything else as great, he is a polytheist. *The Quran* says about the earlier People of the Book that, in later times, they made their scholars and monks into their lords (*Quran*, 9:31). This example shows what happens to nations and communities in their period of decline. They fall from worshipping God alone and become trapped in the disease of worshipping their leaders.

When a nation is alive, it values principles. When it is dead, it turns its leaders into objects of worship. This is the summary of a living nation and a dead nation. A living nation gives importance to goals, while a dead nation gives importance to personalities. A living nation lives in the present; a dead nation lives in the past. A living nation welcomes criticism; a dead nation reacts angrily to it. A living nation stands on real issues; a dead nation stands on imagined ones. A living nation sees everyone as a friend; a dead nation sees everyone as an enemy. A living nation builds its own future; a dead nation spends its energy complaining and protesting against others. The quality of a living nation is patience and tolerance, while the quality of a dead nation is impatience and intolerance.

When the signs of a dead nation begin to appear among

individuals, all energy must be directed to education and preparation. The real task is to revive the spirit of life in people. In a period of rise, a nation's course is one of advance, where action means moving forward; in a period of decline, action means stepping back to prepare. In its period of rise, a nation moves toward its peak, while in its period of decline, it returns to its starting point.

TOWARDS NATURE

A psychologist once said: You can meet friends everywhere, but you cannot meet enemies everywhere—you have to make them. This is completely true. The reality is that friendship is the normal state, while enmity is abnormal. If two people simply live together, their nature leads them toward friendship. Enmity only begins when one of them provokes the other with unpleasant words or actions.

Whenever you fall into enmity with someone, do not think of it as permanent. According to the law of nature, friendship is the lasting condition, not enmity. Try to bring the temporary state back to the permanent one. You will certainly succeed, provided you use a wise approach. Since friendship is the natural state, when a person moves from enmity back to friendship, the whole system of nature supports him. In such an effort, he is not alone—the entire

world around him becomes his ally. And when the whole universe is on a person's side, failure is impossible.

The strongest force in this world is nature. Nothing can depart from the nature that the Creator has fixed for it. Stones, plants, animals—all follow their given nature, and they never turn away from it. The same is true for human beings. Within a person, the most powerful force is also his nature. If you adopt the way of nature, you can win over even the most rebellious person.

THE WAY OF WISDOM

A life without disputes is not possible. Whether you live among your own people or among strangers, conflicts will arise between you and others. You cannot prevent disputes from happening. But what you can do is to end them at the very first stage and save yourself from their harmful results.

Sometimes ignoring is enough to end a dispute. Someone may speak provocative words against you. The best response is not to get provoked. In this way, you crush the dispute at the very beginning.

Sometimes a troublemaker may hurt your dignity and turn it into a matter of honour. Even in such a situation, the best way to preserve your dignity is not to react. Remain silent, remembering that it is God who grants honour and

it is God who takes it away—so why get entangled with another person over it? Such an attitude is often enough to bring the conflict to an end.

Sometimes a dispute seems connected with gain and loss. It may appear that if you adopt patience and avoidance, it will cause material loss. But this is not correct thinking. In such matters, the real choice is not between loss and no loss, but between smaller loss and greater loss. Ending the dispute at the first stage leads to smaller loss; while prolonging it leads to greater loss. So why not leave the path of greater loss and take the path of smaller loss? We cannot stop disputes from arising. But we can certainly protect ourselves from the fire of conflict by choosing the path of avoidance. Let us accept smaller loss in order to save ourselves from greater loss.

THE FRUIT OF MORALITY

Badruddin Ahmed (born 1938) was a resident of Moradabad. He narrated several moving incidents about the communal riots that took place there. These riots began on August 13, 1980, and continued intermittently for the next month. During the riots, a curfew was in place. Everywhere there was disorder. People ran out of food in their homes. Badruddin Sahib said that during those days we could not get milk. So, we would make tea with hot water and drink it without milk.

A police officer, Mr. Sharma, bought some brass toys (showpieces) from a shop. He wanted to have them polished. He came to Badruddin Ahmed for this work. Badruddin polished the toys but did not take any payment. As a result of this good conduct, whenever the officer went on his daily rounds, he would stop his vehicle outside Badruddin's house, get down, and ask if there was any problem, and whether they needed anything. In this way, he came at least once every day.

One day, when Mr. Sharma came, Badruddin Sahib was holding his small child (Najmuddin Ahmed) in his arms. Mr. Sharma asked, "This child must still be drinking milk?" Badruddin replied, "Yes." Mr. Sharma then said, "Are you having any trouble getting milk these days?" Badruddin replied, "We do have difficulty, because there is curfew." Mr. Sharma left. The next day, when he returned, he brought with him two tins of Glaxo milk. Handing them over, he said, "This is a gift from me for your child."

God has placed the greatest power of influence in good character. Good character is a silent weapon that works on everyone—even the staunchest enemy.

THE WONDER OF HARD WORK

Akhtar Hussain Ghazi Khan was born in Ghazipur in 1926. Since 1957, he has been living in Delhi. When he came to Delhi, due to his limited education, he could

not find any good work. For years, he survived by doing odd jobs, earning just enough to live a very simple life. Often, he and his wife and children ate nothing more than chutney with rice or chutney with lentils. But today, he lives in a flat in New Delhi.

In 1970, he and his wife were living in a small mosque room. By then, they had six sons. Yet their condition was such that there was neither a proper shelter nor food for the children. For months, they survived on chutney and rice, and that too in half portions. His wife grew distressed and said, "It would be better if you brought poison. We should all consume it and put an end to our suffering."

These words deeply shook Akhtar Hussain. He thought: This is my condition because I did not acquire education. If my children too remain deprived of education, they will meet the same fate as mine. He remembered a verse he had read in Ismail Meeruthi's book:

*Jahaan tak dekhiye taleem ki farmaan rawai hai,
jo sach poocho to neeche ilm hai, oopar khudai hai.*

Wherever you look, knowledge rules supreme;
To tell the truth, below is knowledge, above is God's throne.

He resolved, I will not give my children poison; I will give them education. A new spirit of determination was awakened in him. The pressure of circumstances turned him into a hero. He began working 16 hours a day. He ran

about day and night to earn enough so his children could study. In a meeting on June 26, 1991, he said, “For years, I wandered Delhi’s streets like a madman, just to work and earn enough money to pay for my children’s education.”

The same circumstances that turned Akhtar Hussain into a hero also made his children hardworking. Every one of them began to study with full dedication. Each child began by standing first in his class. This struggle continued for about twenty years. Today, all of his children are achieving high levels of success.

WISDOM

To understand how corrupt today’s society has become, read this incident. *The Indian Express* (July 24, 1987, page 3) carried a news item from New Delhi with the headline:

Son Kills Mother as She Refuses to Pay 500

The news said that on July 21, 1987, a 23-year-old youth, Ashok Kumar, asked his mother, Sheela, for 500 rupees. The mother refused. As a result, Ashok Kumar lost his temper. There was a stone slab in the house. He picked it up and smashed it on his mother’s head. Her skull split open, and she died. Then Ashok Kumar put his mother’s body in an iron box, locked it, and washed away the bloodstains. When his brother and sister came home in the evening, he told

them their mother had gone to Punjab after hearing news of their father's illness. But the next day, when a foul smell began coming from the box, it was opened. Inside was the decaying corpse of the mother. Ashok Kumar confessed to the murder and is now in police custody.

In a country where callousness and moral corruption are widespread, if Muslims fail to avoid unpleasant situations and stay ready to argue and fight over every issue, the result can only be disgrace and destruction. In such an environment, any leader who instructs them to "stand firm and fight against oppression" is either extremely foolish or very cunning, because no sensible and prudent person would advocate confrontation in such circumstances.

A foolish person looks only at himself, while a wise person looks at others as well. In a world filled with human beings, only the person who takes others into account in his activities will succeed. In contrast, the one who looks only at himself will never succeed in this world. His life's vehicle will not reach its destination but will crash midway and be destroyed. This is the truth of life, and it is a truth that will never change.

THE NO-PROBLEM PERSON

On September 5, 1986, a hijacking took place at Karachi Airport. The plane was a Pan Am flight. Among those who died in the incident was a 24-year-old

woman named Neerja Bhanot. She was a senior purser with the American airline. After the tragedy, her father, Harish Bhanot, wrote a detailed note that was published in *Hindustan Times* (October 5, 1986). In it, he wrote about his daughter and described her with these words:

“Neerja was a no-problem child, right from day one.”

Usually, small children at home tend to be a source of problems. They trouble their parents in different ways. A “no-problem child,” on the other hand, is one who stays content in every situation and never creates difficulties for the family. The best kind of child is the no-problem child. The same applies to adults. The most valuable person is the one who does not cause problems—someone who can live peacefully with others without creating difficulties for them. In this world, personal grievances are inevitable; therefore, the best approach is for individuals to rise above complaints. This quality is important in everyday life, but for collective movements it is absolutely essential. Only those movements succeed that bring together people who do not create problems. In a world already full of difficulties, such people live as though they have no problems at all in relation to others. A person who is free of problems is the one who can help solve the problems of others. Those who are caught up in their own problems only add to

the troubles of the world. They cannot solve them in any meaningful way.

THE ONLY PATH

In a travelogue published in *Al-Risala* (March 1988), I mentioned a Japanese engineer named Shogo Katakura, whom I met in the Maldives. In response to one of my questions, he said that Japan's geography has shaped a mindset among the Japanese to always search for new ideas. The frequent changes of season, along with earthquakes and storms, constantly create new conditions there. As a result, the Japanese are repeatedly compelled to think about how to deal with these changes.

This situation made the search for new ideas a permanent trait of the Japanese. That same quality helped them after the devastation of the Second World War. They re-examined their affairs in light of the new circumstances and, by making fresh plans suited to those conditions, achieved even greater success. Ezra Feivel Vogel (1930–2020), an American sociologist and writer, described this Japanese quality in these words:

“They became the masters of change rather than the victims.” (*Japan As Number One*, London 1979, p. 256)

The journey of life is never traveled on a smooth road. Life is filled with accidents and hardships. These trials come to both individuals and nations. This is part of the system established by the Creator, and there is no way to escape it. In such circumstances, there is only one path to success: to keep going despite the difficulties. To have the courage to move toward the goal even with thorns and stones on the road.

When circumstances change, do not complain. Instead, find new solutions that fit the new conditions—and you will always succeed.

OBSTACLES ARE STEPS

On May 26, 1987, Delhi newspapers carried several front-page stories. One of them was about the Delhi Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination, Class XII, 1987.

In this exam, most of the top-ranking students were girls. Reporters met with these students, interviewed them, and published their stories with photographs.

There was a clear lesson in the backgrounds of these outstanding students. Most did not come from wealthy families. In fact, some faced serious difficulties. Because of

poverty, they had no proper place to study, very few books, and constant noise that distracted them. Yet they overcame all these challenges and earned distinction in their chosen subjects. (*Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, May 26, 1987)

Abundance of resources often makes people careless, while scarcity awakens concern and effort. Having too much can lead to idleness, while having less drives a person to action. In this sense, one may call the person facing scarcity more fortunate. Obstacles can become steps to progress—if one knows how to use them that way.

AN INCIDENT

In 1940, a landlord in eastern U.P. grew angry with a village cobbler. The cobbler had delayed repairing his shoes. He was summoned to the landlord's house. The landlord stood with a stick in hand and ordered him to take off his shirt. The cobbler obeyed immediately. He not only removed his shirt but also turned his back toward the landlord and sat silently, making it easy for him to strike. At first, the landlord was furious at the sight of him. But when the cobbler said nothing and quietly sat with his bare back exposed, the landlord felt pity. He put his stick aside and let him go, saying, "Go,

but don't repeat this mistake."

If we look at the situation around the 1940s, Indian society was still governed by a feudal social order. The cobbler at that time was completely helpless, while the landlord held absolute power over him. What then saved the powerless from the powerful? It was conscience—the inner voice that God has placed in every human being, whether good or bad. When the cobbler humbled himself, the landlord's anger cooled, and his conscience awoke, breaking through the temporary veil of rage.

If, on the other hand, the cobbler had answered back or resisted, the landlord's anger would have grown, completely suppressing his conscience. The cobbler would then have lost the only ally that exists in the heart of every oppressor for the oppressed. The Creator of this world has built it with profound wisdom. Even when a person seems utterly abandoned, some hidden support still exists—provided he does not, through foolishness, deprive himself of it.

The landlord had physical power, but the cobbler had God's power. And who can stand against God's power? Conscience in every human being is God's court of justice. Present your case in that court, and you will never again feel the need to complain of injustice.

AN EASY METHOD

Professor Rasheed Ahmad Siddiqui (1892–1977) was born in Jaunpur. He later became head of the Urdu Department at Aligarh Muslim University. He was best known as a humourist and is regarded among the leading humour writers of Urdu.

His colleague Ale Ahmad Suroor (1911-2002) wrote: “Professor Siddiqui once took one of my articles and published it elsewhere. I had intended to give it to the Urdu monthly, *Adab*. When I protested, he ignored me. When I complained again, the month of Muharram had just ended. Siddiqui wrote to me: ‘Muharram is over, stop mourning.’” (*Qaumi Awaz*, April 22, 1990)

This way of replying can sometimes be very effective. In academic discussions, logic and reasoning are most appropriate. Using sarcasm or humour in such contexts is considered improper. But in many other situations, this lighter style works better—especially when bitterness arises between two people or groups. In such moments, serious humour is often the best solution. When tempers flare, people are in no state to listen to reason. The best approach is to make a witty remark that shifts their attention.

This principle works in the home, in organizations, and even in disputes between groups. If a person keeps calm,

avoids frustration, and thinks clearly, he can always find some pleasant word that cools tempers.

If humour becomes a habit, it is objectionable. But if used as a strategy, it becomes praiseworthy—because sometimes a humorous remark can succeed where serious words fail.

THE SECRET OF LIFE

In 1947, when the Indian subcontinent gained independence, the situation was such that on one side were the people of Pakistan, represented by Mr. Muhammad Jinnah. He said that they had received a “truncated and moth-eaten Pakistan.” (*The Sole Spokesman* by Ayesha Jalal, Cambridge, 1994, p. 290) His vision of Pakistan included the whole of Punjab and Bengal. He also wanted all of Kashmir to be part of his country. For this reason, the Pakistan that came into existence seemed far less than what he had dreamed of. On the other side, the people of India felt the same disappointment. In their minds, the vision of a free India—*Swatantra Bharat*—was greater than the nation that actually emerged. Even after independence, millions of people felt that their beloved India had come to them in pieces. What they

received in reality was much less than what they had hoped for.

Independence, which appeared to be a great achievement, ended up creating a feeling of loss. On both sides of the border, a sense of political frustration grew stronger. Each side began to see the other as its enemy and worked against it. Both nations became busy trying either to revive their old political ambitions or, at the very least, to act against each other in order to cool the burning fire of disappointment within themselves.

Japan presents a very different example. The Second World War reduced its territory and stripped it of its political and military freedom. But the Japanese put aside what they had lost and, content with what remained, began practical efforts. Forty years later, Japan rose to the peak of progress. Meanwhile, India and Pakistan were left only with the habit of raising empty storms of words, each blaming the other for their misfortunes.

Life means being satisfied with less. In this world, the one who accepts less ends up gaining more, while the one who refuses to accept less is deprived not only of the little but also of the greater.

A WORD OF WISDOM

An interview with Congress President P. V. Narasimha Rao was published in *The Times of India* on June 1, 1991. In answer to a question, he said that Indian society is made up of many communities, and every part of it should live in freedom and equality. The only way to live in India, he explained, is to live together:

“We have a plural society and all segments of the society should exist in freedom and equality. The only way to exist in India is to co-exist.”

This is a completely true and correct statement. But it does not apply only to Indian society; it applies to every society in the world. The same principle is valid for Pakistan and Afghanistan, and also for Europe and America. Whether it is within a family or across the entire world, the only way to live is by tolerating each other. Without tolerance and acceptance, neither a family nor a nation can survive.

Differences in this world are as natural as human existence itself. Wherever there are people, there will be differences—whether they belong to one religion and culture or to many. In such a situation, a person must choose one of two paths: either to tolerate differences or to refuse to tolerate them

and keep fighting endlessly with others.

Our choice is not between having differences and not having them, but between tolerating them or refusing to do so and destroying ourselves. If we want life, it can only be found through tolerance. The only other option is to fight and ruin ourselves. Beyond this, no third choice exists.

WHAT PURPOSE DEMANDS

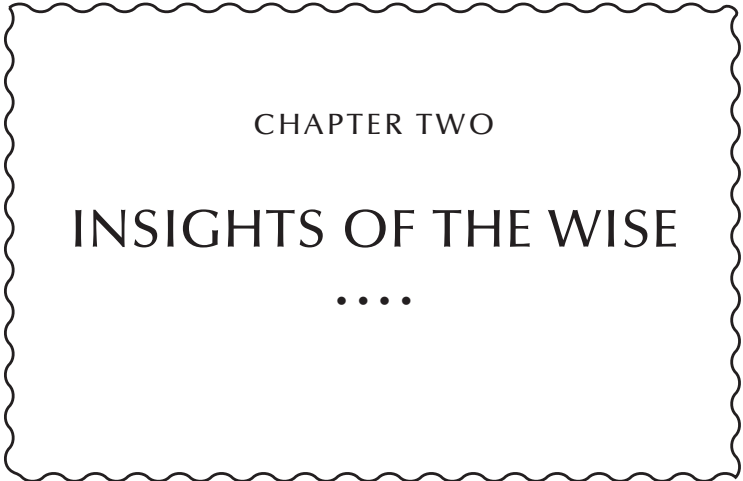
On March 26, 1987, *The Times of India* published a supplement (The Times Offspring). In it, the well-known English journalist Khushwant Singh gave an interview. One question and answer from that interview went like this:

Q: You are a media man. How is it that you are so against television, as you once mentioned in your Malice column?

A: Well, I am against watching it myself. I had one set in my Bombay residence. As a result, I could not concentrate on anything else. I would simply switch on the TV and watch whatever was being broadcast, no matter how meaningless. So I told the television company to take it back, since I prefer to read and write.

What Khushwant Singh did in this case is what we call “preference.” The principle of preference is essential for any purposeful person. If you have a goal in front of you, you must end your interest in everything other than that goal. You need to turn your attention away from every other direction and focus only on your purpose. This is a necessary condition for success; without it, no major achievement can be gained in today’s world.

To gain one thing, you must give up another. Without giving up what needs to be sacrificed, you will not gain what you truly desire.



CHAPTER TWO

INSIGHTS OF THE WISE

...

THE DIFFERENCE IN THINKING

The English poet Frederick Langbridge (1849-1923) certainly gave us food for thought when he penned the following couplet:

Two men look out through the same bars

One sees the mud and one the stars.

This same point was made—rather more effectively—by a Persian poet who said; “The difference between you and me is only one of hearing. Where you hear a door close, I hear it open.”

Tafawot ast mian e shenidan e man o to,

To bastan e dar, man fath e bab mishenawam.

There is no rose without thorns, but one who broods on the existence of thorns without giving any thought to the beauty of the roses above them is like the man who looks at mud in preference to the stars. Social conditions are always a combination of roses and thorns, mud and stars; and it is only the wise man who knows how much importance to give to each. The man who concentrates solely on thorns and mud will be the man who can only hear doors closing and never hear them opening.

Most social problems are problems of the mind. They are almost always capable of being solved by changes of attitude and ways of thinking. It is a question of inculcating the right ways of thinking at the appropriate stage in a man's

spiritual development. Only then will he be a worthy, positive, social being.

The truth is that this world is a test of intelligence. Those who use their intellect will find their way, while those who don't will face nothing but ruin as their fate.

The sea is full of waves and surges. Anyone who wants to steer a boat through it must deal with the waves and storms to reach their goal. In the jungle, there are thorns and predators. The animals living there have no choice but to find a way to survive amid the thorny bushes and their hunting enemies.

The same applies to human society. Among people, there are individuals of various kinds whose interests often clash. Disagreements and conflicts happen for multiple reasons. This ebb and flow, these differences, have always been part of social life and will continue to be. They cannot be completely eliminated under any circumstances.

In such circumstances, there is only one possible path to life and success for a person: to adopt the principle of "despite" as their policy. Despite opposition, they should strive to make people their allies. Despite conflicts, they should find the secret to a joyful life for themselves. Even when faced with enmities and conspiracies, they should keep moving forward with the conviction that their positive actions can overcome all negativity.

In this world, a person must reach for the flowers despite the thorns. Here, one must strive to stay healthy and fit despite

the numerous germs of illness. Similarly, in this world, a person should not become discouraged by unfavourable conditions, nor should they waste time complaining and protesting. They should live in harmony with the realities they cannot change, carefully avoiding obstacles that hinder their journey. Instead of reacting emotionally to antagonistic remarks, they should respond with strategic wisdom. They should be content with receiving less now so they can receive more in the future. They should endure hostility with patience, hoping that today's enemies will become tomorrow's friends.

THINK SOLUTION, NOT COMPLAINT

Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273) holds a very high status among Muslims. His *Masnawi* (Mathnawi), consisting of nearly 26,000 verses, is highly esteemed among Muslims. This revered work has served as a guiding book for scholars for centuries.

In 1258, the Mongols destroyed Baghdad and ended the Abbasid Caliphate, establishing their oppressive rule over the Muslim world. At that time, Rumi was about fifty years old. Through his *Masnawi*, he shared spiritual and moral lessons with Muslims, aiming to uplift their spirits.

Along with this, he also guided Muslims on contemporary issues. In his Persian *Masnawi*, he used parables and

allegories to instruct Muslims on what they should and should not do in such circumstances. One helpful tale is the story of the lion and the rabbit, which is detailed in the “First Book” of the Masnavi. The essence of this story is as follows:

In the forest, there was a lion who, every day, would attack animals to satisfy his hunger, capturing them to serve as his food. As a result, all the animals lived in constant terror and fear. Eventually, they came up with a solution. They talked with the lion and persuaded him not to attack them. Instead, they agreed to send one animal to him each day as a tribute.

The proposal was implemented. Each day, a lottery was held to decide which animal would be the lion’s meal. The animal whose name was drawn was sent to the lion. In this way, all the animals coexisted peacefully in the forest. Eventually, the lottery chose a rabbit’s name. This rabbit had already developed a plan: when its name was drawn, it would not allow itself to become the lion’s prey. Instead, it planned to use strategy to eliminate the lion.

According to his carefully planned schedule, the rabbit arrived at the lion’s den an hour late. The lion, very hungry, became angry over the delay. Seeing only a small rabbit further upset him.

The rabbit spoke softly and humbly: “Sir, the situation is that another lion has entered your territory. The animals

had sent two rabbits as your meal today, but the other lion attacked us. He captured one of us, and I managed to escape and come to you.”

The lion’s anger shifted to the other lion. He roared, demanding to know who dared enter his forest. “Take me to him so I can deal with him myself.” The rabbit then set off with the lion. He led the lion around and finally brought him to the edge of a well, where he said, “Sir, the other lion is inside this well. You can see him for yourself.”

The lion looked into the well and saw his reflection in the water. Thinking the rabbit’s story was true and that another lion was really inside, he roared, and the “other lion” roared back. Unable to tolerate the idea of another lion in his territory, he jumped into the well, attacking his own reflection. He then died in the well, falling victim to his own mistaken anger.

Thus, a rabbit used clever strategy to defeat a foe as mighty as a lion. Rumi concludes by saying that the rabbit’s plan was like a trap for the lion. How remarkable was that rabbit who managed to outsmart the lion:

“The snare of deceit was a lion’s trap,
How remarkable was the rabbit who seized the
lion!”

This parable provided guidance to the Muslims of Rumi’s era. Rumi did not encourage Muslims to take up arms.

He did not suggest that all the forest's inhabitants should unite and attack the lion, promising them the title of hero if they succeeded, or martyrdom if they failed. Instead, Rumi stressed that such actions were unnecessary. His message conveyed strategic wisdom rather than martial bravery.

In contrast, Rumi guided Muslims toward wise strategies. He promoted a path of life rather than one of death. In his proposed approach, a person might start by taking a humble stance, but eventually, they reach greatness and success. This advice of Rumi remains as relevant today as it was when he first expressed it.

ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY

In the February 1987 issue of *Reader's Digest*, an article was published titled "Dare to Change Your Life." The article shares several stories where people initially faced failure, losses, and hardships. Despite these setbacks, they did not give up hope. Even after missing one chance, they stayed focused on the next opportunity. This smart approach worked, helping them find success after an initial failure.

At the end of the article, the author states that life is full of second chances. What it takes to seize these opportunities is simply the ability to recognize them and the courage to act on them:

“Life is full of second chances. All we need for a second chance is the ability to recognize it and the courage to act.”

Life is about seizing second chances. This truth applies equally to individuals and nations. History confirms this. In the early days, Islam had no opportunity in Makkah. However, by making the most of the opportunity in Madinah, Islam created its history. Similarly, Western nations, unable to seize opportunities during the Crusades, later succeeded by taking advantage of intellectual opportunities.

In the present world, it often happens that a person misses the first opportunity, sometimes due to lack of experience and other times because of others' opposition. However, missing the first chance doesn't mean losing all opportunities. If a person doesn't get discouraged after losing the initial chance, they will soon find a second chance, which, if used wisely, can lead them back to their goal.

It's unwise to try to take opportunities that others have already claimed. Wisdom is in focusing on the remaining chances.

The situation can also be understood through the example of Japan. A report with a New York dateline, titled “Japan's Bid to Excel the U.S. in Supercomputers,” which was reproduced in *The Times of India* (April 13, 1989, Section

2, Page 4), casts serious doubt on America's ability to maintain its lead in the field of supercomputers. Despite the United States' long-standing dominance in this area, it is expected that by 1990, Japan will surpass it by launching the fastest supercomputer in the world, which will be introduced to global markets. This grim outlook is further corroborated by a recent study conducted by analysts at an American computer corporation.

The Japanese computer, named SX-X, can perform 20 billion operations of scientific calculations in one second flat. At this rate, it is 25 per cent faster than the fastest American computer. Besides its perfect performance, it has another speciality: its relative cheapness.

This supercomputer has a key role to play not only in scientific research, oil exploration, weather forecasting etc., but also in national security, particularly in the field of nuclear weaponry.

America may have destroyed Japan in 1945 with its 'super bomb,' but it could not take away Japan's potential. With its computers, and now this latest supercomputer, Japan revolutionized its own economy in a mere matter of 45 years. Destruction, however massive, can never put an end to opportunities for construction. And the power of construction undoubtedly far exceeds that of destruction.

TICKET TO SUCCESS

In America, people who have immigrated from Asian countries are generally called Asian Americans. Most of these individuals arrived after 1965. Their current population in the U.S. is about 2%. Among them, some are Jewish, some are Buddhists, some follow Confucianism, and others belong to different religions.

In America, if Asian immigrants believe that their future success depends on someone from their community becoming President, they might find the door to advancement completely shut. This is because the position of President requires being a natural-born citizen of the U.S., a rule that excludes Asian individuals. In their efforts to achieve this goal, Asian immigrants either fall into despair or try unsuccessful campaigns to change the American Constitution to remove this requirement, allowing one of their own to run for president.

However, Asian Americans did not make that mistake. Based on their actual circumstances, they understood that while chances to reach the presidential office were limited for minorities like themselves, there were plenty of opportunities to secure top academic positions. They saw education as their pathway to success. As a result, they put all their effort into education, which brought them great achievements. Even though they make up only 2% of the population, they now hold 20% of the seats in prestigious educational institutions.

This is the way to achieve success in this world. In life, some opportunities are open to a person while others are not. The highest wisdom is to seize the opportunities at hand and move forward with them. If someone keeps banging their head against closed doors, the doors will not open, but their head may suffer. Especially today, education is the key to success, and opportunities to get this key are available to everyone, everywhere.

The principle that is the secret to individual advancement is also the key to the progress of nations and countries. In this regard, Japan sets a commendable example to follow.

An American author wrote a book about Japan titled “Japan as Number One.” In this 250-page book, the author shows how Japan, after suffering total defeat in World War II, managed to bounce back and even challenge its conqueror, the United States. According to the author, the Japanese became masters of change instead of victims. While other countries were wrecked by outside forces, Japan came out stronger.

“Thus, they became the masters of change rather than the victims. Other countries were devastated by foreign influence, but Japan was invigorated.”

— Ezra F. Vogel, *Japan as Number One*, Harvard University Press, London 1979, p.256.

According to the author, Japan’s remarkable success mainly comes from its transformation following military and

political setbacks. Japan shifted its focus from warfare to the pursuit of knowledge. In the third chapter of the book, the author highlights a single key factor behind Japan's current achievements: the continuous passion for learning shared across the Japanese nation. The author writes:

When a foreigner visits Japan, Japanese people often instinctively think, "What can I learn from this person?" Similarly, the three million Japanese who travel abroad each year aim to find new ideas and concepts to bring back and use in their own country.

A SPOONFUL OF SUGAR

A historical incident published in *The Times of India* Supplement, The Neighbourhood Star (March 18-24, 1989) has a lesson for us all. It seems that when the first batch of Parsis from Iran landed on the west coast of Gujrat, their community leader—their peshwa—went straight to the ruling monarch, Yadav Rana and requested him to allow the Parsis to stay in his state. The Raja uttered not a word in reply, but simply handed the Peshwa a glass full to the brim with milk. This was meant to show him that his state already had its full measure of population and that there was no room for any more people.

The Peshwa did not answer in words either. His response was simply to add a spoonful of sugar to the milk and to return

it forthwith to the Raja. This was his way of saying that the Parsis would sweeten their milk—not take possession of it. That is to say that their presence would add sweetness to the life of the state. The Raja was pleased with this response and gave them his permission to stay in Gujrat.

One thousand years have passed since this incident took place, and history has shown how the Parsi Peshwa's words came true. This was because the members of the Parsi community did not waste their time in launching demand and protest movements throughout the country. Instead, they contributed to the progress and development of the country by working harder than everyone else. They made advances, particularly in the fields of education and industry, thus adding to the wealth of the country. In a situation where there were so many 'taker' groups, they achieved, by dint of consistent striving, the status of a 'giver' group. They knew the secret of the good life. In this world, it is the giver who prospers. Those who 'sweeten' the 'milk' of others find positions of honour for themselves. On the contrary, those who have only bitterness for others, will receive bitterness from them in return.

If you want to receive something, enter the world with a "gift card." If you enter with a "demand card," you will find nothing here.

On August 24, 1988, I met Mr. P.D. Malhotra, who was born in 1935. He has served as the Publications Manager at the Sahitya Akademi in New Delhi for about 30 years. He

recalled that one day he was late leaving the office. When he finally stepped outside, it was already midnight. As he was riding his scooter, he reached a street where a police officer stopped him and asked to see his driver's license.

Mr. Malhotra reached into his pocket, and alongside his driving license, he pulled out another card. Holding both cards, the police officer asked what the second card was. It was, in fact, an Eye Donor Card. This card bore the individual's signature along with a statement declaring, "I have gifted my eyes to the nation. Kindly inform the nearest Eye Bank immediately on my demise and help them to fulfil my desire. Thanks."

The police officer was initially very curt in his manner. However, upon seeing the Eye Donor Card, his tone changed instantly. Without further inspection, he said, "Go ahead, go ahead."

In modern times, eye donation is seen as an act of nobility. TV appeals often use emotional language: "There is only one thing in the world that you can give to someone." When the police officer saw Mr. Malhotra's Eye Donor Card, he viewed him as a respectable and caring person. The card became a symbol of Mr. Malhotra's generosity, softening the police officer's attitude toward him.

In this world, those who give are also recipients. The person who gives to others will receive from others. Even if someone has not yet given in action but only intends to give, they become worthy of receiving.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Publius Syrus was a Latin writer from the first century BC. Born in the region of Syria during the Roman period, he died in Rome. One of his sayings is translated into English as follows:

“A wise man guards the future as if it were the present.”

The foolish person focuses on the present, while the wise person looks ahead to the future. The foolish person sees an unfavourable situation now and reacts to it. The wise person uses foresight, thinking about how today's challenges will develop tomorrow. The foolish act based on what is immediate, while the wise plan their actions with the future in mind.

Every action, when judged by its outcome, is a future event. Actions are taken now, but their results always appear later. Therefore, it is correct to evaluate an action based on future outcomes. The rightness of today's action should be judged by how it will turn out when it concludes.

For example, if someone gets stung by a wasp and, in anger, decides to punish the wasps by putting their hand into their nest, the claim that they were only stung once initially by a single wasp becomes pointless. After they insert their hand into the nest, they will be swarmed and stung by hundreds of wasps, causing serious injury.

This world is for the wise; for the foolish, there is no outcome other than acting impulsively and then protesting when the negative results emerge.

The proper use of “today” is not to waste it, but to use it wisely. Those who understand this principle are the ones who achieve great success in the world.

A Western thinker once said, “A good soldier does not die on the first day of battle; instead, he survives so he can fight the enemy the next day.”

This saying applies not only to famous, large-scale wars but also to everyday conflicts. If you find yourself in a disagreement and immediately prepare for the final battle, you are a “poor soldier.” You won’t achieve much success in life by approaching every challenge with that mindset.

The reason is that, in many situations, a person is not able to fight effectively on the “first day.” Therefore, the wise person avoids confrontation initially. Instead, they focus on strengthening and stabilizing themselves away from the battlefield. This way, either their opponent becomes so weak that they surrender without a fight, or they themselves become so powerful that they can win every battle successfully.

The best example of this principle can be seen in the history of Islam. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) spent more than half of his prophetic mission in Makkah. During this period, his opponents subjected him to every kind of

oppression. Still, he did not fight back. He stayed patient and endured quietly. After migrating to Madinah, when opponents waged war on them, he organized his army and fought them in defence when all peaceful options failed. Later, at Hdaybiyyah, he again chose to avoid war. Soon after, the enemy, without a battle, conceded defeat and laid down their arms.

On the “first day,” the Prophet demonstrated patience in the face of his enemies. On the “second day,” he met them in battle and achieved victory. However, the case of Hdaybiyyah was different: there, the “first day” was marked by patience, and on the “second day,” there was no need for battle at all—the enemy surrendered without resistance and laid down their arms.

TWENTY YEARS LATER

It was Columbus who discovered America—this six-word sentence can now be said by anyone in less than six seconds. However, to make this event happen, Columbus had to spend twenty tough years.

Christopher Columbus, born in Italy in 1451 and who died in Spain in 1506, sought assistance from King John II of Portugal in 1484 for his sea expedition. However, the King of Portugal considered it unworthy and declined to help.

Columbus then sought help from Queen Isabella of

Castile, but he received no positive response there either. Nevertheless, Columbus kept trying until, after eight years, the Queen provided him with ships and supplies.

On August 13, 1492, Columbus embarked on his first voyage with three ships. However, he did not reach the shores of America during this trip. Despite numerous challenges and hardships, Columbus stayed committed to his mission.

Finally, after his fourth voyage, Columbus successfully discovered the “New World” in 1504 (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 10, p. 691). Before Columbus, the world was divided into two parts. His discovery united both the “New” and “Old” Worlds into one. It was undoubtedly a monumental achievement, but it was only possible because Columbus and his companions, without losing hope, persevered for 20 years to complete this difficult mission.

This is the path to achieve success in this world. Every success here requires “20 years” of effort. Without this, no meaningful success can be achieved.

Success in this world always comes after a long struggle. A person starts with less and then reaches greater heights. Neil Armstrong was the first person to travel to the moon. On July 21, 1969, he descended from the lunar module named *Eagle* and stepped onto the moon’s surface. At that time, there was a direct communication link between

Earth and the moon. After landing, the first message he sent to Earth was:

“That’s one small step for [a] man, one giant leap for mankind.”

Armstrong meant that my landing on the moon at that moment might seem like just one person stepping onto the lunar surface. However, it marks the start of a new cosmic era. By safely landing on the moon, it would be proven that lunar travel is possible for humanity. This discovery will pave the way for further advancements, leading to a time when ordinary people will travel from one planet to another just as they travel across Earth today.

Every major achievement in the world follows this pattern. First, one person or a few people make sacrifices to achieve a breakthrough. In doing so, they create a new path for humanity’s journey. This initial effort is extremely difficult; it’s like moving a mountain. But once this initial work is done, the rest becomes much easier. A wide path then appears, allowing many people to travel along it.

When a farmer plants a seed in the ground, it may seem like a “small step” toward his goal, but this small step marks the start of his agricultural journey. This journey continues until the field is filled with a full harvest. This approach applies to all human efforts, whether in farming, gardening, or any other field.

CHALLENGE, NOT OPPRESSION

Edmund Burke, (1729-1797) the Irish writer, statesman and philosopher, once observed that “he that wrestles with us, strengthens our nerves, and sharpens our skill. Our antagonist is our helper.” Saadi Shirazi (1210-1291 CE), the famous Persian poet, has expressed very much the same thought in the form of a parable in his book entitled *Gulistan*: “Don’t you see, when a cat becomes frustrated, it claws out the eyes of the lion.”

Na bini ke chun gorbah aajiz shavad

Bar arad ba changaal chashm-e palang

Each of these writers has seen something positive in adversity, and implies that neither passivity nor lamentation is a fitting response to it. Each, by his words, encourages the sufferer to adopt a positive attitude and to launch himself on a positive course of action when confronted by difficulty or danger.

If an incident occurs against you by others, there are two possible reactions. One is to perceive it as oppression, and the other is to see it as a challenge. When viewed as oppression, a mindset of complaint arises, whereas viewing it as a challenge fosters a mindset of competition.

A complaining mindset leads a person to believe their only task is to start protesting and accusing the other party. They use all kinds of words to express their discontent. In

contrast, a competitive mindset pushes a person toward action. It encourages them to understand the situation and find a strategic response that, through wisdom and careful planning, can neutralize the opposing party's plans.

The mindset of complaint and protest drives a person down paths where they waste even their remaining energy in futile struggles. On the other hand, the mindset of challenge awakens a person's hidden potential. It gives them new strength, enabling even the weak to overcome the strong, and a cat to make a lion retreat.

The present world is a world of competition. In such a setting, a complaining mindset leads to destruction, whereas a strategic mindset leads to growth and progress.

Imagine you're walking down a path, and your garment gets caught on the thorns of a bush. What would you do in that moment? Instead of complaining, you would choose the path of strategy. You don't protest against the bush; instead, you think about how to resolve the problem.

A wise person knows that this strategy should also be used in human relationships. Even when dealing with others, conflicts can happen, and we might feel uncomfortable or think someone has wronged us. In such situations, instead of complaining, we should take a strategic approach.

Every issue in life is a challenge, not a sign of one person's injustice toward another. If a problem occurs and you see it as injustice, it can encourage a mindset of complaint and

protest. This mindset may even lead to despair, making you believe that nothing can be done in your current situation. A complaint-driven mindset results in despair, which can then lead to a form of psychological self-destruction.

Conversely, if you see a problem as a challenge, your hidden talents will awaken. You will gain the courage to face the situation. In the first scenario, if your mindset was negative, it will now shift entirely to a positive one—this is the key to success and failure in the present world. In this world, anyone who thrives on complaining and protesting in the face of problems is headed for failure. On the other hand, someone who focuses on finding solutions when faced with issues will inevitably succeed, because every problem has a solution, and every difficulty has a remedy.

EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE

Bruce Van Voorst, a veteran American journalist with a distinguished reputation as a war correspondent, has reported directly from several battlefields around the world. He has sent on-the-spot accounts of the war in the Dominican Republic, the uprising of Iranian revolutionaries against the Shah, the Iran-Iraq War, and the Gulf War.

Time magazine, in its issue of February 4, 1991, published some of his experiences, one of which dealt directly with the integrity and personal qualities of soldiers in

combat. According to him, when the fighting begins, their performance is superlative. Whatever the odds, they carry out their duties with remarkable excellence. In his words:

“In battle, there are no ordinary soldiers; they are all extraordinary.” (p. 4)

What this American journalist has said about the soldier in battle being ‘extraordinary’ applies equally to all men in challenging situations. Man, by birth, has been endowed with great potential. In ordinary, everyday situations, this potential remains untapped. But, whenever there is danger, a challenge, all his slumbering potential is awakened. If, prior to this emergency, only one bulb of the powerhouse was on, now all of its bulbs light up.

Now his brain races, his body is charged with renewed energy. His whole being takes on a heroic character, for challenges transform the weak into the strong, the foolish into the clever. Challenge may appear in the guise of a setback, but as far as its results are concerned, it is the greatest ladder to success. Before the challenge, all men are ordinary human beings, whereas after the challenge they become extraordinary.

Where, before the challenge, there had appeared to be no scope for advancement, after it, opportunities are legion.

Let us take the example of the young Muslim who went to stay with relatives settled in the U.S.A. After the completion of his education there, he took up a job for a

period of two years. Then, feeling that he would like to go back to his own country to build his future, he returned to India.

When I met him some time after his return, he told me that he had been suffering from mental frustration ever since he had come home. All his friends and relatives had kept on telling him what a foolish mistake he had made in leaving the U.S.A. where there is much greater scope for a talented, qualified person than there is here in India.

My response to that was that the very opposite was true. "There is scope in India for the very simple reason that there appears to be no scope. That is because you are considering external rather than internal opportunities. The former relates to those opportunities that exist outside you, in the external world. While the latter relates to the natural capabilities of body and mind bestowed upon you by God. If you take stock of these qualities within you, you will begin to see opportunities all around you which you never imagined existed. Every opportunity for success which is available in the U.S.A. exists in equal measure in India. And, in fact, with the challenges posed by the Indian environment one can make even greater progress here than in the U.S.A."

This is not immediately obvious to people because their sights are usually set on external opportunities. This is why they are quick to point out that opportunities exist

everywhere but on their own doorstep. What they fail to appreciate is the importance of the latent capabilities bestowed upon man by nature. That factor is much more important than mere opportunities.

It is only when man is challenged by life's difficulties that his latent potential begins to awaken. He is awakened from his slumber by the shock of circumstances. This awakening in his life is essential if he is to make any progress. If scope in America signifies the existence of external opportunities, scope in India means the kind of challenge which will awaken a man's potential to the fullest. The latter is far more precious than the former.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TIME

Lord Chesterfield was born in London in 1694 and died there in 1773. His letters addressed to his son, which were later published, described the art of success. In one letter, for instance, he writes, 'I recommend you to take care of the minutes, for the hours will take care of themselves.'

That is to say that if you can save your minutes, your hours will of themselves be saved. Taking care of the parts is just as good as taking care of the whole. This is because the whole is made up of parts.

Mostly people tend to neglect the part in favour of the whole. This mentality ultimately results in failure at some later stage.

Never waste a moment of your available time. By availing of your moments you can be the possessor of your months and years. Wasting minutes will cause you to lose months if not years.

If you are wasting, daily, just five minutes of your hour, this will amount to wasting two hours in twenty four hours. This will eventually come to 60 hours in a month, and 720 hours in a year. This is how the majority of people have been wasting most of their available time. A man whose life span is eighty hardly makes full use of 40 years of his time. Time is your greatest asset. Be meticulous about saving it. All great success ultimately boils down to an accumulation of small successes. Once you are ready to achieve a small success, a big success will of itself come your way. Here is a practical example of how this apparently trivial piece of advice can have great results.

Molvi Lutfullah, born in 1802 in Dharagar (an ancient city of Malwah) was an ordinary tutor. He had not received any of his education in an English school even for a single day, yet his autobiography was published in 1857 by Smith Aldara and Co., London. It was titled: '*Autobiography of Lutfullah: A Mohammedan Gentleman.*' This book included a

foreword by Mr. Edward B. Eastwick, F.R.S., F.S.A., who, in commending the excellence of the English written by Molvi Lutfullah, expressed his amazement at how an Indian could write such an exhaustive book in a foreign language. How did Molvi Lutfullah come to be capable of writing a book which was not only published in London, but which was held praiseworthy for its language by the English publisher? The secret is expressed in this saying: "Little by little becomes great."

Molvi Lutfullah learnt English by his own efforts. He used to teach Hindustani, Persian and Marathi languages to the English employees of the East India Company. The number of his students is put at 100. It was this contact with the English that made him feel interested in learning the English language. He began studying English privately. By working hard continuously for eight years, he managed to have full command over it. He has written in his book that during those eight years, not even a single night passed without having committed to memory 10 words of the English language, or without having thoroughly learnt a few pages from Dr. Gilchrist's Grammar, a 'Ten words' appear to be of no significance, but when multiplied over eight years this step can turn a man into a foreign language writer capable of claiming appreciation even from native speakers who are masters of the language.

THE TIGER'S WAY

A report in *The Times of India* (18 March 1991) stated, “tigers do not like to walk on the jungle grass. They fear that a thorn might pierce their soft feet. Therefore, they always walk on open paths or roads.”

Tigers, like all animals, are shaped by nature's lessons. They always follow methods directly ingrained in them by their Creator. Therefore, it is accurate to say that the tiger's cautious approach is nature's preferred way. For humans, this idea is reflected in Divine guidance: take your precautions (*Quran*, 4:71).

The world was created by God with a specific wisdom, which is why it contains both clear, straightforward paths and thorny bushes. These thorny bushes will inevitably remain in this world; removing them is not possible. Therefore, what needs to be done is similar to what a tiger in the jungle does, as taught by God: protect yourself from the thorny bushes and continue the journey by seeking and following the clear and open paths.

Just as a tiger avoids walking on jungle grass, we should navigate our lives by steering clear of conflicts with others. We should aim not to provoke anger through our actions. If others do become angry with us, we should soothe their anger with patience and use wise strategies to protect ourselves from their wrath.

The actions of the “king of the jungle” are not acts of

cowardice but showcase true bravery. Similarly, when a person adopts this approach in society, it is not cowardice but genuine courage. The strategy of avoidance is that of the lion, not the jackal.

The Lord of the Worlds has one universal rule that applies to humans and all other beings alike. It is to shape one's life by ignoring unpleasant matters.

Imagine a garden of roses. You enter it, and the beautiful petals and fragrant flowers captivate you. At the same time, however, the thorns might prick you, causing your hand to be injured or your clothes to get caught.

In a rose garden, there are two ways to interpret the presence of thorns. One is to see them as caused by the gardener's actions. The other is to view them as a result of the natural law.

If you blame the gardener for the thorns, you'll foster resentment and complaints. But if you see them as a part of the natural law, you'll accept the presence of thorns and focus on avoiding them to reach your goal. One view encourages protesting, while the other motivates finding a solution.

The issues raised by the majority community in India are often seen by Muslims as problems caused by all their writers and speakers. As a result, they choose to protest. However, this approach is completely ineffective. It's like obsessing over the thorns on a rose. Thorns will always be

on the rose bush, just as harsh words and challenges will inevitably exist in human society.

There is only one way to deal with these difficult and divisive issues: ignore them and keep moving forward in life while overlooking them. Such social issues are part of God's creative plan and, therefore, can never be fully eliminated. However, by accepting their presence, we can certainly continue our journey through life.

The ignorant person gets caught up in unwelcome matters, while the wise person moves past them without getting entangled. Basically, this is the key to success and failure in this world: getting tangled up in problems causes failure, while ignoring problems leads to success.

WATER INSTEAD OF BLOOD

Mr Muhammad Afzal Ladiwala, 35, who lives in Bombay, recounted this incident at a meeting on February 24, 1991. On January 22, 1991, there was a cultural program at Rang Bhawan (Dhobi Talao), which Afzal attended. The program ended around 11:30 p.m. After it finished, he went to Bombay VT station and took a train to Kurla; by then, it was roughly 12:30 a.m. The distance from the station to his lodging (Hillow Pul) is about two kilometers. He decided to take a three-wheeler and

waited on the road. Just then, a three-wheeler appeared, and he had paan in his mouth. To call the three-wheeler, he quickly spat out the paan, and by chance, a passenger who was standing nearby ended up having the entire mouthful land on his foot.

The passenger immediately flew into a rage and said angrily, "You eat paan and you don't even know how to behave when you eat it." Afzal, a regular reader of my Urdu magazine *Al-Risala*, responded not with anger, but with calm words. He said, "I admit my mistake. Eating paan was wrong, and what I did afterward was wrong too." The man grew angrier, but instead of replying to his provoking words with more provocation, Afzal said, "Please forgive me." The man retorted that it was easy to do something wrong to someone and then say, "forgive me."

Mr Afzal replied, "Brother, I am not asking for a formal forgiveness; I ask for it from my heart. Now please allow me to wash your foot." When Afzal offered to wash his foot, the man softened a little, and after some more words, he finally agreed to let Afzal wash his foot. There was a tea shop nearby; Afzal went straight there and said, "Uncle, give me a glass of water." When he brought the glass, the man had cooled down completely and said, "Give it to me; I will wash it myself."

The man took the glass in his hand and washed it. One glass wasn't enough to make him completely clean, so Afzal ran

and brought another, continuing this process until the man's foot was thoroughly clean. This incident happened outside the railway station. During the conversation, Afzal told the man, "Brother, if you were a M (Muslim), or even if you were a NM (Non-Muslim), I would have to do the same because Islam commands us to do so." Hearing this, the man embraced Afzal and said, "Brother, I am a non-Muslim, and this is the first time in my life I have met a Muslim like you. If other Muslims were like you, all quarrels would end."

Now the man was completely changed. Earlier, he had been burning with anger and a thirst for revenge, but now, feeling ashamed, he said to Afzal, "Brother, please forgive me. I caused you great trouble. Because of me, you had to bring water, and you even missed your three-wheeler." Afzal replied, "Please don't embarrass me. The real fault in this matter was mine, and bringing the water was my duty, which I have fulfilled." The man who, at the beginning of the incident, had been blaming the other, in the end admitted his own fault, felt ashamed, and began asking for forgiveness.

At the time this occurred, there was severe communal tension in the Jogeshwari area of Bombay, about fifteen kilometers from Kurla. Under those circumstances, if Afzal had responded to provocation with more provocation, the outcome could have been what has happened in many similar situations elsewhere: communal unrest, with loss of life and property. It could have been that instead of

reaching home, Afzal, God forbid, would have been taken to the hospital, and Hindu-Muslim rioting in the area could have destroyed hundreds of families.

After telling the story, Afzal said: at that moment, I remembered the teachings of Al-Risala. It was the mindset Al-Risala had given me that kept me from becoming inflamed at the moment of provocation and, as a result, saved me from a terrible outcome. The glass of water I brought prevented hundreds of people from reaching that ghastly end where blood would be spilled on the streets. Words can act like fire or like ice: some words can stoke a man's anger into a furnace, while others can cool his blazing temper. It is up to the speaker which of the two he chooses.

AN EASY SOLUTION

Altaf Husain Hali Panipati (1837–1914) was a man of revolutionary thinking. He started a reform movement in Urdu literature and heavily criticized the tradition of classical Urdu poetry. He claimed that Urdu poetry had become mainly exaggeration, romanticism, and fanciful imagination, while it should be meaningful. As an example, he produced the *Musaddas*, also called “Madd-o-Jazr-e-Islam,” a very famous long poem written in 1887.

This criticism greatly angered those who took pride in Urdu poetry and considered it their glory. Hostile articles began to appear against Hali. The newspaper *Oudh Punch*

of Lucknow often wrote about him in the worst possible manner, using titles such as:

Abtar hamare hamlon se haali ka haal hai

Maidan Panipat ki tarah paimaal hai

Shattered by our assaults is Hali's very state,

Trampled like Panipat's field beneath the weight.

Hali never responded to these abusive attacks. He silently continued his work. After a few years, his critics grew tired and fell silent. Someone asked Hali how his opponents had finally quietened down. In reply, without naming anyone, he recited this verse:

Kya poochhte ho kyun kar sab nukta cheen hue chup

Sab kuch kaha unhon ne par hum ne dam na maara

Why wonder now that every critic's voice fell still?

They spoke their piece—yet we remained
unmoved, unheard.

The easiest and most effective reply to false opposition is to give no reply at all. False opposition is always baseless; it is destined to collapse on its own. To respond to it is like extending its life. If one remains patient, it will one day fall like a rootless tree. It can never long survive on God's earth.

The greatest killer of falsehood is time. Wait for time, and you will see that it destroys the mischief far more completely than any effort you could make to destroy it yourself.

This method is not confined to a single situation. In whatever matter the strategy of silent patience is adopted, it ultimately proves effective.

Some Christians youth wrote in black letters on Delhi's bridges and walls the phrase in English: "Jesus is coming soon." Afterwards, some Hindu youths, stirred by a spirit of retaliation, added words everywhere so that the phrase read: "Jesus is coming soon to become Hindu." The construction of the sentence itself showed that this was not the work of educated Hindus, for grammatically correct English would be: "To become a Hindu."

If a similar incident had taken place with Muslims, at once a certain superficial class of people would have begun shouting that it was an insult to the Prophet, an affront to Muslim feelings, and a challenge to their religious honour. Then some Muslim youths would have been provoked into retaliation, and soon the city would have descended into Hindu-Muslim riots. After that, so-called Muslim leaders would have issued statements proving the incompetence of the administration. Relief funds would be opened, and some would begin to claim credit for services to the community. Hot headlines would be printed in Urdu newspapers, increasing their circulation. And as for the Muslim masses, their share would be nothing but further ruin.

But the Christians took no notice of this "provocative act." The result was that the whole incident simply became a non-event.

On the morning of 19 February 1990, I stood near the Oberoi Hotel flyover in New Delhi, looking at the writing on its walls. On the wide road below, traffic rushed past on both sides. No one had the time to stop and read the words painted on the bridge. The writing remained there merely as a meaningless mark, waiting for rain and wind to erase it—before anyone even read it or absorbed any impression from it.

Any “provocation” so empty of substance, yet responded to with anger and violence, shows beyond doubt that those who react in this way are the most foolish of all fools.

THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) was the third President of the USA from 1801 to 1809. A man of great erudition, he had a knowledge of English, Latin, Greek, French, Spanish and Anglo Saxon. Historians have rightly called him an “extraordinarily learned man.” He studied all the disciplines from philosophy and science to religion and, in his later days, attempted an analysis of the New Testament to discover what Jesus had really said, as opposed to what he is reported to have said.

In his will, Jefferson expressed the desire to have on his gravestone (Monticello), not an inscription to say that he had been president of America, but simply the words:

“Here was buried Thomas Jefferson... father of the University of Virginia”

Knowledge is the greatest treasure. This is one of the great truths of life. For those who have learnt the importance of knowledge, even the presidency of the USA will appear lacking in significance.

Knowledge is the only branch of human existence which, having no outer limits, never becomes tedious for man. There is no field in which it cannot be put to use. It gives man a keen awareness, which helps him to discover the world, and enables him to understand things in depth. Knowledge, the currency with which you can buy everything in this world, is what sets man's feet upon the high road to success.

Knowledge is the key to all progress—for both individuals and nations. Whoever possesses knowledge, it is as if they have everything.

On February 5, 1987, Mr. Abdul Rahman Antulay (Barrister-at-Law and former Chief Minister of Maharashtra, who died in 2014) recounted an incident. Around 1954, when he was a law student at the Council of Legal Education in London, his English professor shared this story during a lecture while explaining a legal issue.

A large industrial factory suddenly shut down. The engineers tried to restart it but were unsuccessful. Finally, a renowned expert was called in. He arrived, examined the factory, and inspected its machines. Then he paused at

one point and requested a hammer. When the hammer was brought, he struck once at a specific spot. Immediately, the machine started up, and the factory was operational again. Later, the expert sent a bill for one hundred pounds. The factory manager thought the amount was excessive. He wrote to the expert: "You hardly did anything. You only struck once with a hammer. We cannot understand how you can charge one hundred pounds for that. Please furnish my client with further and better particulars."

In his reply, the expert explained that the bill was fully justified. He said that the one shilling was for using the hammer to strike the correct spot, and the remainder was for identifying the fault and pinpointing its exact location. In his words:

"£99.19 to diagnose the problem, and one shilling to pick up the hammer and strike the right spot."

In this world, the highest value belongs to knowledge. Out of a hundred, if one part is the value of labour, ninety-nine parts must be counted as the value of knowledge.

AFTER DEPRIVATION

Samuel Butler, a well-known English writer of the 1800s, once said: "Life is the art of drawing sufficient conclusions from insufficient premises."

Butler based this on natural reasoning. However, the

concept presented by the Shariah regarding life is exactly the same. The Quran tells us that in this world, God has established a system where ease is paired with hardship:

“Indeed, with hardship there is ease” (*Quran* 94:6).

Once, the Prophet Muhammad saw a mountain path called *al-Dayyiqah* (the difficult one). He said, “No, in fact, it is *al-Yusra* (the easy one).” (*Seerah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 2, p. 482) Islam teaches that a person should find ease within hardship and see a tough path as an easy one.

The life of the Prophet of Islam is the highest example of this teaching. He faced the harshest difficulties, but through wise planning, he turned them to his advantage. He transformed disadvantage into advantage. The orientalist E.E. Kellet, referring to this quality of the Prophet, wrote: “He faced adversity with the determination to wring success out of failure.” (*A Short History of Religions*, p. 334)

In this world, on one side is man, who creates difficulties for other men. On the other side is God’s system, which has placed within every difficulty its own solution. To complain of human-created difficulties is, in reality, to see only man’s actions and not God’s. For if one were to see God’s work, instead of complaining, he would set himself to use it.

In this world, after every failure, the possibility of new success remains. All that is required is that one should seize that possibility and make himself successful once again.

In *Al-Risala* (December 1988), the story of Canadian athlete Ben Johnson (b. 1961) was published. In the world championship race, he won first place with great success. However, the very next day, his gold medal was taken away, and a harsh decision was announced: he would be barred from all competitions for the next two years. For Ben Johnson, this was the greatest setback of his life. But he did not waste time protesting against the “unjust judges.” Instead, he immediately began to plan anew for his training.

In November 1988, Italy’s television network filmed an interview at his residence in Toronto, which was later reported in newspapers. According to *The Times of India* (29 November 1988), the world champion sprinter wept as he told the television camera that he had never knowingly broken any sporting rule. Yet he continued his training and dreamed of returning at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. He said that his athletic record on the track was the result of thirteen years of continuous hard work.

He appeared visibly distressed. Remembering the painful moments after the Seoul Olympics, he broke down in tears. Interviewer Gianni Minoli said that filming had to be stopped for five minutes because Ben Johnson could not control his sobbing.

Johnson explained that to get back on track, he trains six days a week, four hours a day. He said: “My work is only

to run. Sitting idle is something I cannot even think of. My wish is to compete again. They have taken away my gold medal, not my speed.”

The person who takes something from you always seizes what you own, but not your very self. Your being, along with all its abilities, still stays with you. Use what still belongs to you, and after every loss, you can create a new story of your own.

AVOID PROVOCATION

In India, lions are found most abundantly in the Gir Forest Sanctuary in Gujrat. At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were fewer than twenty lions there. But according to a census in May 1990, the number had risen to 280. Because of this increase, human life in the area came under threat.

A report in *The Times of India* dated August 22, 1990, noted that over the previous two years, these lions had killed sixteen people and injured 140 others. Following these incidents, a team led by Mr. Ravi Chellam was appointed to investigate. Their findings indicated that although lions caused several attacks, many of these incidents were triggered by human actions that provoked the animals, rather than outright aggression. As the report states:

“The researchers have attributed most of the lion attacks on humans to provocations of the animals.”

A lion is a fierce predator and the biggest natural threat to humans. But despite its ferocity, it stays true to its nature—and that nature is not to attack people unless it is provoked.

This is one of the signs of creation, demonstrating how to protect oneself from the “predatory human being.” The only sure way to stay safe from a cruel person is to keep him within the limits of his nature. Before provocation, every person is guided by his nature; after provocation, he goes outside of it. In reality, it is nature itself that restrains man from cruelty and violence. Why take a step that breaks this restraint?

Before provocation, a lion is a harmless creature. Once provoked, it can become man-eating. Do not provoke the lion, and you will stay safe from harm.

Gentleness and patience are not signs of weakness. They are vital principles of life—taught by the Creator of nature to all His creatures.

There is an Arabic proverb: *al-samahu rabahun*—gentleness and open-mindedness in dealings always bring benefits.

This saying comes from human experience. Over thousands of years, people have tried both approaches: gentleness and harshness. Experience has shown that harshness often

yields the opposite of what one wants, while gentleness leads to results that are helpful and positive.

Imagine a simple scene at a train station. Two men are walking—one in front, the other behind. The man behind is carrying a large trunk. As he hurries forward, the trunk hits the foot of the man in front, causing him to fall onto the platform.

The man behind immediately stopped and, embarrassed, said: “Excuse me.” Hearing this, the man in front relaxed and replied: “OK, no harm done.” Both then continued on their way.

Now imagine the opposite. Suppose in the same situation, both become angry. One shouts, “Are you blind?” The other retorts, “You are ill-mannered, you don’t know how to speak!” If such words are exchanged, the quarrel will escalate until they fight. At first, only dust was on their clothes; later, blood may be on their bodies. At first, only their clothes were torn; later, their bones may be broken.

Whether in family life or outside, whether in disputes within a nation or between nations—the principle remains the same. Gentleness and generosity of spirit end conflicts; harshness only makes them worse.

Gentleness is like pouring water on a fire; harshness is like pouring gasoline on it. The first puts out the flames, while the second makes them burn brighter.

A FRIEND WITHIN THE ENEMY

Dr. Syed Abdul Latif (1891–1971) was born in Kurnool, Deccan. He gained fame for his English translation of the Quran and his other scholarly works. As a boy, without telling his father, he enrolled in a local high school. His father, who disliked the English language and their education, became angry when he found out and asked harshly, “What will you do by studying English?” The thin, frail boy replied, “I will translate the Quran into English.”

In 1915, he earned his B.A. with distinction, and in 1920, he was appointed as a lecturer in English at Osmania University in Hyderabad. Two years later, in 1922, a new opportunity emerged when the university chose four teachers for advanced studies in Europe, granting each an interest-free loan of thirty-thousand rupees. Among them was Syed Abdul Latif.

In London, he sought admission to a B.A. (Honours) program. However, the head of the English Department at King’s College and other professors were so impressed by his ability that they exempted him from both the B.A. and M.A., allowing him to go directly to a Ph.D. His thesis, ‘The Influence of English Literature on Urdu Literature,’ was given three years for completion, but he finished it in two. The college approved it, and he was awarded the doctorate. Returning to Hyderabad a year early, he was

immediately appointed professor at Osmania University (*Anjuman* by Hasanuddin Ahmed IAS, 1974, pp. 85-86).

In 1922, the English were regarded as the greatest enemies of Muslims. Yet these very “enemies” displayed such generosity toward a Muslim student—a generosity seldom found even in Muslim institutions. The truth is that even among enemies, one may find friends. But only those who rise above the categories of friend and foe, and see others simply as human beings, can discover such a friend.

The common tendency is to see your own group as “ours” and others as “outsiders.” But with an open heart, everyone is your own, and no one is a stranger.

Swami Rama Tirtha (1873–1906), also known as Ram Soami, was an exceptionally talented person. One of his most profound sayings was: “On the doors of life it says ‘Pull,’ yet most of us keep pushing instead.”

Fluent in English, he traveled to America in 1903 to share his message of faith. When his ship docked at the port of San Francisco, he disembarked, and an American came up to him for an introduction. Their conversation went like this:

American: “Where is your luggage?”

Swami Rama Tirtha: “This is all my luggage.”

American: “And where do you keep your money?”

Swami Rama Tirtha: “I have no money.”

American: “Then how do you manage your life?”

Swami Rama Tirtha: “I love everyone, and that love takes care of everything.”

American: “Then you must at least have a friend in America?”

Swami Rama Tirtha: “Yes, I have a friend—and that friend is you.”

With these words, he wrapped his arms around the American’s shoulders. The man was so touched that he became a loyal friend. He took Swami Rama Tirtha to his home, stayed with him during his time in America, and eventually became his student.

This world has no greater power than love. Through love, you can turn an opponent into a friend and make a stranger your own—if your love is genuine and not fake.

SUCCESS THROUGH FAILURE

Mohan Singh Oberoi was born on August 10, 1900, in a village in Jhelum. His father was a contractor in Peshawar, but when Oberoi was just six months old, his father died. With limited resources, he was able to complete his matriculation in Sargodha and his intermediate studies in Lahore. However, financial difficulties forced him to give up further education.

Looking back, Oberoi recalled that this was a moment of deep anxiety. He realized that with such limited qualifications, he could not secure a job: “This was a moment of anxiety in my life as I realised that my qualifications would not get me a job.”

Excluded from government employment, he turned to business. In 1924, he started in a small role at a hotel. By 1939, when World War II began, he had already opened his own hotel in Calcutta. From that point, his ventures continued to grow steadily.

Over time, Oberoi built a hotel empire. Today, hotels bearing his name are present in almost every major Indian city and many abroad—in Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, the Gulf, Egypt, and Africa.

Denied a spot in one field, he made an even greater impact in another. One of the biggest secrets of success is that real achievement goes to those who can get up again after falling. If you don’t find an opportunity in one field, start working in another that allows you to fulfill the hopes you had for the first.

Dr. Salim Ali (1896–1987) achieved remarkable distinction in the field of ornithology. India awarded him the Padma Bhushan. Britain presented him with a Gold Medal. Holland honoured him with the Golden Ark. The World Wildlife Fund gave him a prize of \$50,000. Three Indian universities awarded him honorary doctorates. He was also nominated to the Rajya Sabha, among many other honours.

Yet this remarkable success started with a setback. Born in the busy Bombay neighbourhood of Khetwadi, Ali finished his B.A. and looked for work. But, in his words, “every institution and every office seemed to have a board hung up saying No vacancy.”

That disappointment opened a new path. One day, he caught a small bird and noticed an unusual feature: its yellow neck. Curious, he began to research. He read extensively about birds; his interest deepened, and soon he acquired a simple pair of binoculars. Observing birds and recording notes became his daily routine.

Over time, he mastered ornithology so well that he expanded the field into new areas. Two of his books became classics: one describes 1,200 bird species of the Indian subcontinent, and another, *The Book of Indian Birds*, has been reprinted eleven times and read worldwide.

Though denied ordinary employment, he discovered a higher calling. Rejected by institutions on the grounds, he achieved international recognition by studying the skies.

MAINTAIN DISTANCE

Many vehicles move together on the road: from the front, back, right, and left. Therefore, many rules are put in place to ensure safe road travel. These traffic rules are posted everywhere along the roadside so that passing drivers can read them and stay safe.

While driving along a road in Delhi, I saw a similar sign posted: Maintain Distance.

When I read it, I realized that these two words carry a lot of wisdom. This forms a complete philosophy that applies not only to road travel but also to life's journey.

In the present world, no one lives in complete isolation. Everyone must work among many others. Each person has their own interests and an ego. Everyone wants to move forward by pushing others down.

This situation requires us to always follow the principle of “maintain distance” in life's journey. We should keep enough space from others to continue our path without the risk of collision.

This very principle is emphasized in the *Quran* (28:55) as *i'raaz*—turning away with restraint. If you do not keep this wisdom in mind, your benefit may clash with another's benefit. A single harsh word from you could cause someone else's anger. A moment of carelessness might lead you into unnecessary conflict with others.

The consequence is similar to a road: an accident. A road accident stops a person's trip and can even end the traveler's life. Likewise, ignoring this principle in life will stop your progress. You might also lose your life or be erased from history like a mistake.

There are numerous examples of this throughout history.

Whenever someone pushes their boundaries, they often face a terrible outcome.

Nitin Walia is a 3-year-old boy who lives with his parents, Vijay Pal Walia and Sunita, in Shahdara. He wanted to see the zoo, so his parents took him to the Delhi Zoo. While observing various animals, they reached the enclosure of the white tiger. They paused to watch the tiger and its cubs. At this point, Nitin climbed over the railing and put his hand into the cage. The tiger, Neema, pounced and bit his hand. People hit the tiger with sticks, but by then, it had chewed the child's hand up to the shoulder. After surgery, the child survived but lost his right hand permanently.

According to a reporter from *The Times of India* (March 21, 1988), the child's parents blamed the zoo staff for the accident. They said there was no guard present near the cage at that time.

“The parents claim that there were no guards around.”

Often, when people have an accident, they immediately look for someone else to blame. However, in this world, such efforts are completely useless. Only those who control themselves can avoid accidents. Those who lose control will inevitably have accidents, no matter how many words they use to blame others.

At the zoo, a railing is placed four feet away from the cage

of ferocious animals to keep people at a safe distance. Similarly, in every phase of life, there is a boundary. Those who stay within this limit stay safe. Those who go beyond the boundary cannot protect themselves from accidents, whether inside or outside the zoo.

THE COURAGE TO FACE CHALLENGES

J.R.D. Tata ranks among India's greatest industrialists. At 85 years old, he was still flying airplanes and skiing on snow. When asked about the secret to his vitality at such an advanced age, he replied:

“One of the things that keep me young is the fact that I am prepared to live dangerously. You must be prepared to take risks—risk in business, sport, marriage, everything—to make life worthwhile.” (*Hindustan Times*, 13 July 1991)

There is an American saying: “No risk, no gain.” Why do risk and danger lead a person to success? Because risk awakens hidden strength. It transforms an ordinary individual into an extraordinary one.

A person who never faces challenges and always avoids risks becomes lazy and complacent. His natural talents stay asleep. He is like a seed that never breaks open to grow

into a tree, or a reservoir that never stirs into waves strong enough to cause a storm.

But when danger appears, when life is threatened by risk, a person's hidden potential awakens. The pressure of circumstances forces him to act, to draw on every ounce of strength.

Every person has great potential, but it remains dormant until activated by challenge. To awaken it, there's only one way: they must face danger.

A life of comfort may seem peaceful, but its high cost is an incomplete character. Such a person never attains the heights he could have reached.

On January 6, 1990, newspapers reported the surprising news that Mohammad Azharuddin had been unanimously appointed captain of the Indian national cricket team. He would lead the team on its tour of New Zealand. Many expected the position to go to Krishnamachari Srikkanth, who had recently captained India in the Sharjah Cup, the Nehru Cup, and the Pakistan tour.

At just 27, the Hyderabad batsman—often called the “wonder boy” of Indian cricket—became the second youngest Indian captain, after Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi, who took on the role at 21.

What lifted Azharuddin to such heights was his ability to face challenges without losing heart and to emerge stronger. In

December 1989, during the Pakistan tour, his Test career seemed at risk. In the first innings of the Faisalabad Test, he was dismissed for a duck. But in the second innings, with a brilliant century, he rescued his career from collapse.

According to *The Times of India* (January 2, 1990), the selection committee chairman at the time, Raj Singh Dungarpur (1935–2009), explained the decision:

“He loves getting out of challenging situations, as was seen on the tour of Pakistan where he was on the verge of being dropped from the first Test, and that’s an important ingredient in leadership.”

This world is a world of challenges. Only those who confront them with courage succeed. The more deeply this quality is rooted in a person, the greater the success they are destined to achieve.

THE POWER OF CONSCIENCE

Abul Barakat Alvi, a resident of Nizampur in Azamgarh district (U.P.), recounted an incident from his area during a meeting on August 29, 1989—an event that carries a deep lesson.

To the northwest of Azamgarh lies the village of Raida, situated on the banks of the Mujhoi River near the border of Faizabad. In this village, there are only four Muslim households compared to two hundred Hindu households.

In November 1987, a nilgai (blue bull) wandered into a sugarcane field. A local Muslim named Jhannu, a tailor by profession, wanted it hunted. He told a man from the nearby village of Makhdoompur, who owned a gun. The man came, fired, and wounded the animal.

Had the nilgai died instantly, no problem would have arisen. But since it fled, leaving a trail of blood, the Hindus became upset. When they learned that Jhannu had encouraged the shooting, they called a village council (*panchayat*). Jhannu was summoned, and the decision was made: he must pay a fine of one thousand rupees.

In that village, there was no shallow leader to mislead Jhannu the tailor, nor was there any Muslim influence strong enough to deceive him in the name of communal pride. So, nature itself guided Jhannu the tailor. He stood before the people and said: "I accept the decision of the panchayat. I am a poor man; I do not have ready cash. But I will sell the belongings of my house and pay it."

Three days later, the Hindus' conscience was stirred. They called another panchayat and said among themselves: "Here Muslims are very few and weak. If outsiders hear that we collected a fine from them, they will look down on us. People will say we oppressed them simply because they were weak. This will bring us dishonour." By unanimous agreement, they decided that Jhannu's fine should be canceled. And so it was.

Every person has a conscience inside. That conscience is essentially your representative within others. Use this natural representative, and you'll have no reason to complain about anyone.

C.F. Dole (Charles Fletcher Dole, 1845–1927) once said:

“Goodwill is the mightiest force in the universe.”

This is not just the saying of one person—it is a fundamental truth about human nature. The Creator has made people in such a way that if they are treated badly, they flare up in anger; but if treated kindly, they are moved to gratitude and become more gentle toward the one who showed kindness.

This universal natural principle makes no exceptions for anyone—not even for friends or enemies. Speak harshly to a friend, insult him, or hurt him, and you'll see how quickly he forgets the friendship. A spirit of retaliation will arise within him. The same person who once praised you will now be ready to attack you with thorns and fire.

On the other hand, speak softly to someone you see as an enemy. Address one of their needs, help them during a tough time—even something as simple as offering a glass of cold water when they're thirsty—and their attitude will shift. The person who seemed your enemy can become your friend and supporter.

By placing this trait in human nature, God has given us a powerful support. This quality has equipped even the weakest person with the strongest weapon of influence.

Lions and wolves may be defeated with bullets—but human beings can be won over with nothing more than a shower of kindness.

It's so easy to win hearts. Yet, the foolish turn this simplest task into the hardest.

APPLYING THE BRAIN

Sir C. V. Raman (1888-1970), the well-known Indian scientist, was born in Tiruchirapally and died in Bangalore. Besides being Director of the Raman Research Institute, he held many prestigious academic posts. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for physics in 1930.

Raman believed that science came from the brain and not from equipment. When one of his pupils in Spectroscopy complained that he had only a 1 KW lamp, whereas his competitor abroad had a 10 KW lamp, Raman told him: 'Don't worry. Put a 10 KW brain to the problem.' (*Sunday Review*, March 17, 1991).

This is wholly true. Everything in this world depends on the brain. A lack of equipment can be compensated for by the brain, but no amount of equipment can ever compensate for a lack of brain power.

None of the scientists born two to three hundred years before in the west had access to the superior equipment

which is available to the university research student of today. Almost all of them worked with far less equipment. For instance, Newton worked with Kerosene lamps, as electricity had yet to be discovered. Yet it was scientists such as these who established the bases of modern western Science.

This principle thus applies to everyone. Whenever a person feels ill-equipped in terms of money or resources, they should strive to compensate by applying extra brain power, an ample substitute for all other shortcomings. Brain power, nature's greatest gift to humankind, is so astonishing in its reach that there is no deficiency for which it cannot provide a remedy.

Here is another instance of the power of the brain. Mr. Kamal Alig, who studied at Aligarh University from 1976 to 1981, gives us an example from his student days of how the brain can compensate for all shortcomings. It seems that in those days he was a chain smoker (he has now given up smoking) and was in the habit of going on smoking late into the night, when he was studying for examinations. One night, at midnight, he had a great urge to smoke, but he had run out of matches, and even the heater was not working. His urge to smoke went on increasing, and his mind remained preoccupied with this problem for half an hour. Finally, he managed to think of a way to save it. His room was lit by a 100 watt bulb, and he thought that if he

wrapped some light material around it, it would become very hot and start to burn. So he took an old, worn-out piece of cloth and did just that. Within five minutes the cloth had ignited. Mr. Kamal immediately lit his cigarette and began smoking.

This is called ‘mental labour,’ as opposed to physical labour with which people are better acquainted. Of the two kinds of labour, the superior kind is mental labour. All the great achievements in this world have been brought about through mental labour. Physical labour involves only the wielding of the mattock and the hammer. But it is mental labour which runs offices, factories and modern scientific establishments. If the former can bring us one rupee, the latter can bring us a million.

THE LESSON OF HISTORY

In the early 17th century, Sir Thomas Roe (1581–1644) traveled from London to India and stayed for three years (1615–1618). He built relationships with the Mughal emperor Jahangir. One of his skills was knowing Turkish, which allowed him to speak directly with Jahangir.

When Roe arrived, Jahangir was in Ajmer. Roe stayed there for three years, sometimes invited to the royal court for conversations. Soon, Roe realized that Jahangir was very interested in painting. One day, he gave a painting to the emperor, who admired it greatly.

Roe sensed that the opportunity he had been waiting for had finally arrived. He requested something that seemed small and insignificant: permission to set up a trading post in the coastal city of Surat. Jahangir granted this request with a royal decree, allowing the English East India Company to establish their factory there.

At first glance, permission to establish a trading post in a single city might seem insignificant. The vast expanse of India remained securely under Mughal control, with all its grandeur and power intact. However, this small start in Surat provided the English with the foothold they would eventually use to dominate everything else. History later showed that those who accept less often succeed in achieving more.

This is the lesson of history—but few truly learn it. In this world, what matters most is securing the initial moment of an event. Whoever controls that beginning will, sooner or later, reach its ultimate conclusion.

India's independence movement can be traced back to 1799, when Sultan Tipu was killed fighting the British. After that, for over a century, resistance against the British continued through violent uprisings—bomb attacks on officials, plots to involve foreign powers, and similar disturbances.

Such methods were inherently dramatic and violent. At the very mention of them, the British would become alert and

suppress them with full force. But when Gandhi entered the political scene, the entire course of the struggle changed. While earlier leaders demanded freedom through violence, Gandhi chose the opposite path: nonviolence. He declared that the freedom movement would proceed on a basis that the British considered trivial and unworthy of attention.

A notable example of this method was the Dandi March. For centuries, salt was produced along the Gujarat coast, but the British government had taken control of this industry. To peacefully oppose the law, Gandhi set out on foot from Sabarmati, traveling 240 miles in 24 days, until he reached the Dandi coast. There, by picking up a piece of salt, he symbolically broke the government's law.

When Gandhi announced this plan, British officials gathered to discuss it. One officer remarked:

“Let him make his salt. Mr. Gandhi will have to find a great deal more than a pinch of salt to bring down the British Empire.”

In this world, true success depends on a move that appears minor at first but proves unbeatable in the end. What may seem to an opponent like just a pinch of salt can, when the result comes out, turn out to be a mountain of salt.

THE POWER OF UNITY

Tychø Brahe (1546–1601) was born in Scania, Denmark, and died in Prague. Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) was born in Württemberg, Germany, and died in Regensburg. Both were engaged in research in astronomy. But neither of them, on his own, was able to discover any great truth about the universe.

Tychø Brahe and Kepler were contemporaries. Yet one obstacle prevented both from making a major astronomical discovery: neither had mastery over every aspect of the subject. Tychø Brahe carried out many observations and recorded them carefully, building up a large collection of written data. But astronomy also depends on mathematics, and Tychø Brahe was weak in that field. He lacked the ability to connect his observations to mathematical principles.

Kepler, on the other hand, had little skill in observation. He rarely observed. Even though the telescope had already been invented in his time, he hardly made use of it. His strength was mathematics, and through calculations he developed many valuable theories about astronomy.

This is where Tychø Brahe's generosity came into play. Despite personal differences with Kepler—even though Kepler once accused him of hypocrisy in a letter and insulted him—Tychø Brahe, despite his fiery temperament, did not get angry. Near the end of his life, he decided that Kepler would be the best heir to his scientific records.

So, overlooking Kepler's rudeness, he called him over and, before his death in 1601, handed his entire written collection to Kepler free of charge.

When Kepler received this treasure of observations, his shortcomings were covered. He applied all his mathematical skill to systematize them. The result was three principles, which became famous as Kepler's Laws of Planetary Motion. Later, using these laws, Sir Isaac Newton (1643–1727) completed his discovery of gravitational force.

This is the secret of great achievements in today's world. Everyone has limitations. No one alone can accomplish something great. A task is completed only when several people are willing to combine their abilities and efforts for one goal. Without united effort, no major event can take place.

But unity has a price. That price is learning to ignore differences and come together on what unites us. It means staying united with people despite disagreements. Differences among people are inevitable, even when they are sincere. Avoiding disagreement altogether is impossible. In such situations, the practical approach is for people to develop the courage to remain united despite differences. For the sake of collective good, they must put aside personal concerns. For something greater, they must overlook smaller matters. To serve a higher purpose, they must bury personal demands.

That is what is called high spirit and magnanimity. Without this spirit and magnanimity, it is impossible to bring any great plan to completion in this world.

A NATURAL SHIELD

In 1973, there were about 1,800 tigers in India's forests. Later, *Project Tiger* was launched to increase their numbers. The project succeeded, and now the number of tigers has risen to over 4,000. But with the increase in tigers, the danger also increased. In Uttar Pradesh's Terai region lies Dudhwa National Park, and between India and Bangladesh are the Sundarbans. In these places, tigers often come out and kill villagers' cattle.

However, it is rare for a tiger to attack a human. Even when it does, the attack usually comes from behind. The reason is that the tiger fears the human face. A report states that in the Sundarbans forest, people who enter the tiger's territory out of necessity put a mask on the back of their heads, so that a human face can be seen both from the front and from behind. The reason for this tactic is that tigers rarely attack a person from the front. "Those that do enter the buffer zone of the Sundarbans wear masks on the back of their heads because a tiger seldom attacks a man from the front." (*The Times of India*, 11 December 1988)

The human face naturally carries an aura of authority. Just as this aura restrains animals, it restrains humans as well. A tiger is overawed by the human face and does not dare to attack it directly. A tiger attacks only when, through carelessness, a person gives the impression of weakness. The same is true between humans. In normal conditions, one person is overawed by another's presence. This awe disappears only when some incident breaks the natural balance.

A hadith says: "God created Adam in His own image" (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6227). The human face is indeed the most dignified thing in the known universe. It carries a natural greatness.

God has made your face and personality an undefeated shield. You can use it whenever needed. But your success in doing so depends entirely on the image you have built in the eyes of others.

If you have created the impression that you are shallow and worthless—that you only know how to fight meaningless quarrels, that you make bold claims but retreat at the first threat—then when you appear before others, your presence will carry no weight. At that time you will be like a broken shield, providing no protection.

In contrast, if you have built the impression that you are serious and weighty, that your good character has won people's respect, then the moment you appear, people's eyes will lower before you. Your presence will have the

same effect as the saying:

“He came, he saw, he conquered.”

Your human face is a powerful shield. A person dares to strike at you only when, through your own mistake, you give the impression of weakness. Maintain your human dignity with wisdom, and no one will dare to strike at you.

AWARENESS OF PURPOSE

In 1931, Japan occupied northeastern China (Manchuria) and set up a government of its choice there. After this, relations between China and Japan deteriorated. On 7 July 1937, the Marco Polo Bridge incident near Beijing (Peking) took place. This incident inflamed suppressed feelings, and military conflict broke out, which eventually led to the Second World War.

From then on, hatred and tension existed between China and Japan. A few years ago, the two countries signed an agreement under which Japan was to set up a steel mill in China. But after the agreement was fulfilled, the Chinese government suddenly canceled it.

When China's Prime Minister, Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997), recently ended extreme communism and adopted the Open Door Policy, Japan found a new opportunity. Today, Japan has launched a strong commercial drive in China. If you want to travel from Japan to China, you must book

your plane seat three months in advance, because every seat is full.

China offers enormous opportunities for trade. Japan wants to make full use of them. For this reason, Japan deliberately forgot the bitter memories of the past. As one traveler put it, Japan decided to endure every “pinprick” from China without complaint.

That traveler wrote that during his stay in Tokyo (June 1985), Radio Beijing announced that China would build a museum showing pictures of Japanese atrocities from the past. The museum was to be inaugurated in 1987, marking fifty years since the Marco Polo Bridge incident. When Japanese people were asked to comment on this news, they remained silent. When pressed further, they replied:

“You know our Chinese friends have a way of twisting our tails, and appealing to our conscience.” (*The Times of India*, 13 June 1985)

Japan had one clear goal: to expand its trade. That goal shaped its character. It taught Japan wisdom, patience, restraint, and to speak only when necessary. That goal showed Japan how to forget the past and bury all disputes and grievances unilaterally, so that the road to its objective would be clear.

The psychology of a purposeful group is always the same, whether its goal is trade or something else. When a group loses these qualities, it is a sign that it has lost its sense of purpose. Without a goal before it, its members have no character either.

In today's times, the greatest weakness of our community is its lack of character. Whatever field you test, you will immediately see that people have lost their strength of character. No solid plan can be built on them. Wherever they are used, they turn out to be weak bricks in the wall. They do not prove to be strong bricks that can hold a structure together.

The fundamental reason for this weakness is that our community has lost its sense of purpose. It has become a directionless group, with no goal for the development of this world or for the Hereafter. This is its true weakness.

If the sense of purpose is revived among the people, they will once again emerge as a vibrant and dynamic community. They will regain the noble character that once distinguished them.

To awaken a sense of purpose within individuals is to awaken everything within them. Purpose stirs a person's hidden potential and transforms them into a new human being.

MISUNDERSTANDING

In hot regions, a particular kind of insect is found. It is commonly called the praying mantis, but more accurately it should be called the preying mantis, because it feeds by hunting other insects.

Around one thousand types of mantis have been discovered worldwide. They range in length from one inch to seven inches. Their colours vary according to their environment—for example, brown, red, or green.

Once, a man made a small kitchen garden on open land near his house. In small plots, he planted coriander, chilies, eggplant and tomatoes. When the plants grew and became lush, one day he noticed two large, double-coloured insects in one of the beds. He feared they would eat and damage his vegetables. At once, he caught both insects and killed them.

That evening, a friend came to visit him. He was a botany teacher at the local college. The man proudly told him, “Today two big insects entered my kitchen garden. They wanted to eat my vegetables, but before they could do any damage, I killed them.”

He described the incident in such a way that his friend became curious about what the new insects might be. He asked, “Are the dead insects still there? Let me see them.” The man then showed both insects to his friend. After looking at them, the friend said, “You acted very foolishly. Don’t you know, this is a mantis? And a mantis is not a plant-eating insect—it is well known as a carnivorous insect. It had come here by nature’s arrangement to help you. It was against its nature to eat any vegetables. It would not have harmed your plants at all. Instead, it only eats

those insects that damage your vegetables, insects that are otherwise very difficult for you to eliminate. How unwise you were—you did not understand what was good or bad for you. You killed a valuable watchman of your garden.”

Hearing these words from his friend, the man was left speechless. He deeply regretted what he had done. He became so upset that he fell ill and was unable to work for several days.

This example shows how misunderstanding can lead a person into serious mistakes. At times, a misunderstanding may even drive someone to take another person’s life, though that person may be completely innocent. One may go to the extent of insulting another, when in fact that individual deserves the highest respect.

That is why Islamic law instructs us to investigate fully before forming an opinion or taking any action against someone. Do not make the mistake of hearing a report and immediately believing it, then acting against someone based on it. It could turn out, once investigated, that the report you heard was completely false and baseless:

“Believers, if an evil-doer brings you news, ascertain the correctness of the report fully, lest you unwittingly harm others, and then regret what you have done.” (49:6)

Avoiding the harm of false reports is simple—do not believe anything until you have confirmed it through reliable, direct sources.

THE POWER OF USEFULNESS

On July 20, 1990, *Hindustan Times* carried a report from its Moscow correspondent, Mr. Bhavani Sen Gupta, titled “A New USSR is Emerging.” In it, while describing changes in the Soviet Union, he quoted a senior Russian expert on international affairs as saying: “The United States will not be the first love of the USSR. The first love will be united Europe. Then Japan, followed by the US and China.” I asked, surprised, “What about India?” The Russian replied calmly, “India is special. India is not our first, second, or third love. India is our love forever.”

For forty years, our government told us that the Soviet Union was our greatest friend. But this reply shows that India has now been reduced to a mere formal relationship. The reason is simple. Earlier, Russia needed us; now it no longer does. During the Cold War, Russia used us to counter the United States. But with peace between Russia and America, that rivalry ended, and so did our importance. Today, Russia values only those countries that can help build its modern economy—and Europe and Japan can do that, not India. The secret of importance for any person or nation lies in becoming useful to others. Every other basis is hollow, collapsing with the first gust of wind.

On December 28, 1990, *Hindustan Times* published another report, this one by Mr. N.C. Menon, an Indian journalist based in Washington. He wrote that when Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev visited India during Rajiv Gandhi's government, the Prime Minister had proposed close cooperation between India, China, and the Soviet Union to form a bloc against the US (and possibly against the rising European union). Gorbachev, with blunt honesty, replied that what we need most is new technology, and neither India nor China can provide it.

For forty years, Russia saw "capitalist West" as its enemy and "socialist India" as its friend. But after long experience, it realized that India brought it no benefit, while the capitalist West could play a vital role in its development. So Russia let India go, ignored complaints, and befriended the capitalist West.

The "capitalist nation" won over its greatest enemy through its fruitfulness, while socialist India's lack of fruitfulness caused it to lose its greatest friend. This is the true secret of success in today's world. Success in this world is achieved through fruitfulness, not by erecting lofty structures of mere words.

A SURE SOLUTION

After reading the October 1986 issue of *Al-Risala*, a reader wrote a long letter (October 7, 1986). Part of it said: “Your travelogues are not only informative but also unique in style. This time too, your account of Bombay was the same. In it, I read your meeting with driver Hiralal and the answer he gave to your question about avoiding accidents. It reminded me of a similar story.”

A taxi driver, who had never had a single accident in his 55 years, once gave a lecture on safe driving. He said: “It takes me just a minute to explain how to drive safely. The method is very simple. While driving, just remember this—every other driver on the road is crazy.” (*Muhiuddin Muhammad*, Hyderabad)

A “crazy” person is one who cannot be relied upon, from whom nothing can be expected. When nothing can be expected from the other side, thinking in terms of mutual understanding is pointless. In such cases, the only way is to think one-sidedly and seek a one-sided solution. Everyone knows that you do not fight with a madman—you avoid him. The solution is to stay away, not to clash. The driver who assumes others are crazy will not waste time complaining about them. He will focus entirely on himself. Sometimes he will stop. Sometimes he will slow down or move aside to find his own way. A person on the road who places full responsibility on himself in this way will never meet with an accident.

That driver summed up the secret of life in a single phrase. In other words: do not expect anything from others. Take full responsibility yourself. Then you can be sure you will never face an accident.

What the driver said about avoiding accidents on the road also applies to avoiding accidents in life. You can be sure to avoid social accidents, provided you take one-sided responsibility upon yourself. The fact is, in today's world, the most reliable solution to problems is the very one that driver practiced, which kept him completely safe throughout his long career.

In strict medical terms, perhaps only one percent of people in the world are truly insane. But in another sense, ninety-nine percent are potentially mad. Under normal conditions, they may appear fine. But when personal interest is involved, when their ego is hurt, when they are angered, or when they face someone they dislike, even a decent person can turn indecent. A sane person, too, can act insane.

Once, while traveling from Hyderabad to Mahbubnagar, I myself experienced a lesson. Our car was speeding down the road when suddenly an ox appeared. The driver did not complain about the ox, nor did he continue recklessly. He braked immediately, stopped for a moment, and observed where the ox was heading. Once it had crossed more than half the road and it was clear it was going east, the driver turned the car west, went around it, and continued on his way. The problems of life are always solved through one-

sided action. Those who seek to resolve issues on the basis of mutual agreement will, in this present world, meet no fate other than to continue their futile protests until they depart from it.

VICTORY WITHOUT WAR

Mr. Richard Nixon was the President of the United States from 1968 to 1974. He published a book of memoirs titled 1999: Victory Without War.

Among the points he makes in this book is one about the relationship between America and Japan. In this context, one of the things Mr. Nixon writes can be summarized as follows:

The Americans decimated Japan in 1945 and, after World War II, rebuilt it with enormous economic backing as a model country to disprove the communist ideology that poverty cannot be removed through the process of capitalism. Democracy was planted on its territory in place of the ancient monarchy. Its constitution was written by the Americans. Its defence was controlled from Washington, DC. After 35 years of this experiment, bitter economic disagreements have clouded US-Japan relations in recent years. There is a severe trade

imbalance. In 1986, Japan sold goods to the US to the value of \$60 billion in excess of the goods purchased from the States, contributing to the total American trade deficit of \$170 billion. Indigenous rice production costs Japan \$2,000 a ton, yet it is not prepared to buy rice from its benefactor, the US, offered at \$180 a ton, with a view “to protect Japanese farmers.” The US is sore that the “Japanese have closed their markets to American goods.” (*The Times of India*, April 2, 1989, p.2)

After the Second World War, America stood as the victor and dominant power, while Japan was the defeated and subjugated nation. Yet the steps taken by the victor for its own benefit were turned by the defeated into advantages of its own. That is the true test of today's world. Success belongs to those who can find opportunity in the hostile plans of their opponents, who can turn their enemy's strategies into stepping-stones for their own progress.

In this world, even defeat can open the door to victory. Here, battles can be won without war. But this is only for the wise; for the unwise, there is no true success in God's world. For them, even victory turns into defeat, and defeat remains defeat.

PRUDENCE IN SPENDING

Earning is difficult, but spending wisely is even harder. A person who knows how to spend properly can live a higher standard of life even on a modest income. By contrast, someone who does not know how to spend correctly will face financial problems even with a large income. In truth, a person who spends with prudence and economy has found the secret of increasing his income without actually earning more. He has, in effect, added to his income without making any extra money.

Think before you spend, just as you think before you earn. Do everything in a planned way, and you will never fall into financial hardship. Wasteful spending is simply another name for poverty, while thrift is another name for prosperity.

Two examples illustrate this fact. I know of one man who, after completing his MSc, got a job with a salary of 400 rupees a month. He decided to treat only 200 rupees as his actual income and deposit the remaining 200 in a savings account. As his salary increased—to 1,000, then 2,000, 3,000, 4,000, and eventually 5,000 rupees—he always treated only half as his spending income, saving the rest each month in the bank.

After living like this for ten years, he checked his account and found that a large sum had accumulated. He then left his job and started a business. Today, he has advanced considerably in that business. But he still follows the same

method of life that he adopted in the beginning, and he is now enjoying a prosperous and successful life.

Now take the opposite example. Another man received a lump sum of one lakh rupees as his share of inheritance. With this, he opened a cloth shop. The shop quickly became successful. But after a few years, it collapsed. The reason was that he failed to understand the difference between sales and profit. For example, if goods worth 5,000 rupees were sold in his shop, 4,500 rupees of that was the cost, and only 500 rupees was the actual profit. But he began spending the entire 5,000 as if it were income.

Clearly, this was the worst kind of extravagance. Within a few years, he went bankrupt.

In this world, a life of prudence is another name for prosperity. A life without prudence is another name for misery.

DO NOT BE WASTEFUL

According to one narration, the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) said: “It is wasteful to eat everything you crave” (*Sunan Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 3352). Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph, expressed the same idea in these words: “It is enough wastefulness for a person that he eats everything he desires” (*Al-Zuhd wa al-Raqa’iq* by Ibn al-Mubarak, Report No. 769).

The terms *saraf* and *israf* literally mean wastefulness—that is, spending one’s wealth on what is unnecessary, driven by desire rather than genuine need. Every person lives between two forces: need and desire. To spend in line with one’s needs is lawful, but to spend merely to satisfy desire is something for which a person will be answerable in the Hereafter.

A MESSAGE OF HOPE

In the *Quran*, while describing human difficulties, it is said that when unfavourable situations arise, adopt patience and trust in God. God is your Guardian; after hardship, He will create ease for you: “God will bring about ease after hardship” (65:7).

Just as the earth is always turning, the circumstances of human life also keep changing. A person should never lose hope under any condition. He should always give preference to hope over despair. The present should never make him lose confidence in the future.

If the coming of night is seen from the standpoint of today, it appears as the arrival of darkness. But if you look at it from the standpoint of tomorrow, it becomes the prelude to a bright morning.

The season of autumn may seem, on the surface, to be a time

of falling leaves. But when seen in the light of the future, it signals the coming of a fresh and flourishing spring.

This is the unchanging law of nature. This law applies both to the physical world and to human life. It never changes. Since the world was created based on this system, no one should despair. When every darkness eventually turns into light, why should anyone fear temporary conditions of difficulty? If a person faces difficulty, he should meet it with patience and wisdom, and strive to overcome it. And if he does not have the strength to struggle, even then he should trust God and wait for tomorrow.

In this world, just as work is an act, waiting is also an act. If a person cannot show proof through action, then he should show proof through waiting. If his waiting is sincere, it is possible that he may gain through waiting what others are striving to achieve through effort. Nature's system itself is moving towards its final outcome, provided a person has the patience to wait for the appointed time.

There is an Arabic saying: "Many things that seem harmful turn out to be beneficial." This is full of meaning. It tells us an important truth about life: in this world, no harm is only harm. Every difficulty is accompanied by ease. Every loss carries a hidden benefit. If a person faces a loss, he should not sink into despair. Instead, he should turn his mind towards thinking. It is possible that he may discover an opportunity that not only compensates for the loss but also brings him greater success.

For example, a person was born in a landowning family in a village. In 1925, his father died when he was only six years old. After his father's death, the family took over the property. Apart from a small house, nothing was left for him. Forced by circumstances, at the age of ten he went out to earn a living. He left the village and went to the city. For many years, he worked as a labourer. Eventually, circumstances placed him in a craft trade. Through hard work, he progressed and eventually opened a factory. His progress continued, and when he died at the age of 70, he was a leading industrialist, leaving behind property worth millions.

If hardship had not come his way—if he had inherited all the family fields—he would have remained occupied in farming. He would have lived and died as a farmer. But hardship and loss lifted him higher. His bitter experiences took him out of the agricultural age and into the industrial age.

The opportunities available to a human being in this world are limitless. Whenever one opportunity ends, an even greater one appears in its place. Why, then, should a person lose hope? Why lament or protest over a setback? Why not seize the new opportunity that can turn one's dusk once again into a bright dawn?

When an opportunity slips away, one should not waste time mourning what is lost. Instead, they should find and seize the next opportunity. It might even be that through this effort, they achieve greater success than before.

THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

The Tata family has achieved extraordinary progress in industry in India. Their expansion is so vast that it is called the Tata Industrial Empire. This success did not come by chance. There are clear reasons for it. The most prominent are the moral qualities they have consistently shown for nearly 150 years.

1. The story of their industrial success begins with Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata (1839–1904), a Parsi from Gujarat. In 1868, he started a trading company in Bombay with a capital of 21,000 rupees. After him, his elder son, Dorabji Tata, expanded the company further. He established “Tata Steel” and other ventures. This beginning grew into today’s industrial empire. Throughout, the Tata group continued its mission with perseverance and unity. Nothing could break their determination and solidarity.
2. After Dorabji Tata, J. R. D. Tata (1904-1993) gave tremendous growth to the business in 1938. He is rightly called a great visionary. One proof of his foresight is that he was the first in India to recognize the importance of aviation. He was the first Indian pilot, receiving his license in March 1929. In 1932, the first airline, “Tata Airways,” was established. After independence in 1947, the Indian government bought a major share in Tata Airways and took control of it, renaming it “Air India.”

3. Jehangir Ratanji Dadabhoy Tata (J. R. D. Tata) was a man of extraordinary generosity. In 1930, the Aga Khan announced a prize for the person who could fly an aircraft between England and India in the shortest time. J. R. D. Tata flew his plane from Karachi, while another competitor flew from London. Both landed in Cairo for refueling. At that time, Tata learned that his rival needed a spare part and would have to wait at Cairo airport until it arrived from England. This was a golden opportunity for Tata to win easily. But, with generosity, he gave the spare part from his own plane to his rival. As a result, his rival won the competition. Yet Tata never expressed any regret.
4. J. R. D. Tata was extremely respectful of human dignity. Despite his authority, he never imposed his opinion on others. Instead, he always used persuasion. On one occasion, a director in his company put up a notice on an elevator stating that it could only be used by directors. When Tata heard about it, he quickly went to the spot and personally tore down the notice with his own hands (*Hindustan Times*, 3 February 1992).

The secret of success in this world can be summed up in one word: principle. A person who lives according to principles succeeds, while one who abandons them fails.

What is principle? Principle means living in accordance with reality. If reality demands perseverance, success cannot

come with inconsistency. If reality favours foresight, acting against foresight cannot bring success. If reality requires respect for people's nature, then opposing their nature will never result in success.

Moreover, principles must be followed above personal gain. If someone follows principles only where they seem profitable, but abandons them where no immediate benefit appears, such a person cannot be called principled.

A person who makes principles subservient to personal interests may achieve small successes in life. But true success is reserved for those who uphold principles for their own sake, who remain firm on them regardless of personal gain.

FROM EXPERIENCE

A Pakistani Muslim, one of my readers, often visits India to meet his relatives. We received a detailed letter from him describing three incidents. One of these experiences is reproduced below in his own words:

“I am from Pakistan and frequently travel to Bangalore to visit my relatives. During this visit to India, I happened to read the January 1992 issue of my Urdu magazine Al-Risala. In it, I came across an article by Mr. Afzal titled ‘Water Instead of Blood’ (see p. 80). It reminded me of three personal experiences in India, which I am briefly recording

here. These events strengthened my belief that if we hold love and openness for others instead of hatred and narrowness—if our behaviour is marked by gentleness instead of harshness, and our words carry sweetness instead of bitterness—then the whole world can be filled with peace and harmony.”

“This incident happened in 1982. I was traveling by train from Delhi to Bangalore with my wife, daughter, and young son. The coach we were in was small and had about fifteen other passengers, all Hindus from India. Most of them were young students returning to Bangalore after their holidays. Because of our simple and open nature, the young men soon became friendly with us. Seeing my beard and my family’s regular prayers, they assumed we belonged to a religious household. So, along with casual talk about the world, the weather, and regional politics, the conversation eventually turned to religion. One Hindu youth in particular led much of the discussion. It was clear from his words that he was intelligent and had a wide knowledge of his faith. After many questions and answers, he asked me something that changed the entire atmosphere of the coach. It suddenly felt as though we were not from different communities, but from one family, with no division or distance between us.

His question was: ‘What do you think of our Lord Krishna?’ I replied: ‘Let me share a principle. According to the Quran, no Muslim has the right or permission to insult the leaders or guides of any religion (6:108). On the contrary, we are commanded to show respect to the religious figures and spiritual leaders of all faiths. Therefore, by this principle, we are bound to honour Shri Krishna as well as the leaders of other religions.’

Hearing this, the young man grasped my hand and said: ‘If all religious people were like you, then fights, killings, and constant riots would disappear forever.’

I took the opportunity and said: ‘If that is the case, then all of you must promise me that throughout your lives you will remove hatred and hostility from people’s hearts, and instead sow seeds of reconciliation, love, and understanding.’ All of them made that promise.

Another outcome of this long journey was that we had to get off at Bangalore Cantonment Station, while they were to get off at Bangalore City Station. Since our stop came first, as soon as the train halted, those young men did not let any porter touch our luggage, nor did they allow us to lift it ourselves.

Each of them stepped forward like porters, carried our bags on their shoulders, and in moments placed all our luggage on the platform. As the train moved again, each youth shook hands with us, embraced us, greeted our relatives, and waved goodbye before boarding. They left us with warm memories of that journey as they continued on their way.”

A LESSON

The cover story of *Time* magazine (10 February 1992) was:

“America in the mind of Japan,
Japan in the mind of America.”

The report’s conclusion, in the magazine’s own words, was that the apparent friction between America and Japan hides a deeper truth: both nations need each other.

“Friction between the U.S. and Japan masks a deeper truth: the two nations need each other.”
(p. 8)

The magazine observed that the U.S. economy, while still strong, feels like it’s weakening. The fall of the Soviet Union has cleared the way, but a new threat is emerging: Japan. Americans are increasingly viewing Japan as an economic rival, fueled by the \$41 billion trade deficit:

“America, still the most powerful economy, nonetheless feels itself to be somehow the diminished thing. The old enemy, the Soviet Union, has vanished. With the U.S. running a \$41 billion trade deficit with Japan, the once deferential partner begins to look to some Americans like the new enemy.” (p. 9)

When the Second World War ended, America was the victor and Japan the vanquished. Yet today, that order has been reversed—and the reason lies entirely in the moral realm. America had gained supremacy over Japan through the power of its weapons, but in the end, the strength of character prevailed. Japan, equipped with superior moral discipline, ultimately rose above America.

According to a magazine report, most Japanese—and many Americans as well—place the blame for America’s economic problems on America itself. Masao Kunihiro, a Japanese anthropologist, asked: “Whatever happened to the good old Emersonian credo that if you build a better mousetrap, the world will beat a path to your door?” He noted that this very belief had once made America economically and industrially powerful. “But many of us,” he said, “rightly or wrongly, now feel that the U.S. is no longer producing mousetraps better than ours.” (p. 14)

Another Japanese commentator, Yoshio Sakurauchi, reflected the prevailing Japanese view of America’s

shortcomings: “The root of America’s trade problem lies in the inferior quality of American labor.” (p. 14)

During the Second World War, America had subjected Japan to great cruelty. Had Japan chosen to respond with words—turning its voice and pen toward propaganda against America’s oppression and conspiracy—it would have gained nothing. In fact, it would have lost whatever remained after the war in the noise of fruitless protest. Instead, Japan chose patience. Rather than raising an outcry, it made constructive effort its mission. The result was extraordinary. In just forty years, history was transformed: the one once behind moved ahead, and the one occupying the front seat was compelled to move back.

THE ART OF PATIENCE

On June 24, 1992, the New Delhi English daily *The Pioneer* published a report by Jal Deep Lahiri. The report carries an important lesson: that some unpleasant situations are best handled simply by bearing them. Refusing to tolerate such situations only makes them worse.

The incident took place on the evening of June 22, 1992, when the Rajdhani Express left Delhi for Howrah. Soon after the train departed, passengers in one of the coaches (C-4) discovered that its air-conditioning unit was not

working. The 70 passengers in that coach became upset. Without considering the consequences, they pulled the emergency chain, forcing the train to stop and return to the previous station, Tilak Bridge. The passengers got down onto the platform and began arguing with the railway officials. They demanded that the faulty coach be removed and replaced with a working one. The officials, however, explained that it was not possible to do so immediately, as no replacement was available nearby.

The argument led nowhere. Eventually, the train resumed its journey with the same defective coach. However, due to this unnecessary commotion, the Rajdhani Express was delayed by five hours. The disruption also caused a “rail jam” between Tilak Bridge and New Delhi Station, delaying five other trains as well. Two passengers who needed to reach Calcutta on time were so frustrated that they left the train and rushed to Palam Airport to catch an evening flight instead.

This incident shows the difference between maturity and immaturity of mind. The whole problem came from immaturity. Had those seventy passengers been people of mature judgment, neither this disruption nor the suffering of hundreds of others would have occurred.

So what is maturity? It is the ability to accept a reality that cannot be changed. When faced with such situations, immature people protest loudly, while mature people adapt

and move on, ensuring that the journey of life continues without interruption.

If we reflect on the actions of those 70 passengers, it becomes clear that they did not measure up to this standard of maturity. Had they simply endured the temporary discomfort of a failed air-conditioner, their problem would have remained a single inconvenience—tolerating a little heat for a while. But because they lacked patience, their one problem multiplied into many.

In this world, not everything can always go according to one's wishes. Life, by its nature, involves accepting loss. A person who cannot accept one loss will, in the end, have to accept many. To avoid reacting negatively during times of loss is what Islam calls patience (*sabr*).

Patience is essential for a successful life. Without it, no one can remain firm on the path to success—patience against personal desires, patience against the harm caused by others, patience in the face of loss of life and property, patience with unpleasant experiences, patience in times of deprivation and patience in hardship.

In this world, everyone repeatedly faces negative experiences. Only someone willing to live with patience can maintain a positive outlook despite them. Patience allows a person to remain unaffected by unpleasant events and to keep a constructive attitude during difficulties. It is patience that truly makes a person courageous.

THE WISDOM OF SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES

The Treaty of Hudaibiyyah in Islamic history is a great example of collective wisdom. Although the Quraysh of Makkah fiercely opposed the message of the Prophet Muhammad from the very beginning there were some among them who wanted to avoid a direct confrontation with him. Instead, they wanted to divert his attention toward other Arab tribes. The Prophet made wise use of this mindset to his advantage.

Among the chiefs of Makkah, one prominent leader was Utbah ibn Rabi'ah. Before the *Hijrah*, the Quraysh once sent him as their representative to the Prophet (ﷺ). A detailed account of this meeting is found in the books of seerah (biography). After his conversation with the Prophet, Utbah returned and said to the Quraysh:

“O people of Quraysh, accept my proposal. Do not interfere between this man and what he is pursuing; instead, withdraw from him. If the Arab tribes deal with him, you will be spared any involvement. And if he prevails over them, then his rule will be your rule, and his honour will be your honour.” (*Sirah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 1, p. 294)

Similarly, after the *Hijrah*, when the Quraysh set out to fight the Prophet at Badr, they consulted among themselves along the way. At that time, Utbah spoke on behalf of one group of the Quraysh and said:

“O people of Quraysh, by God, you will gain nothing by confronting Muhammad and his companions. By God, if you meet them in battle, each of you will be facing someone he would hate to fight—his cousin, his nephew, or a man from his own clan. So return, and keep away from Muhammad and the other Arab tribes. If the Arabs defeat him, then that is exactly what you want. And if the outcome is different, you will still be safe, without having risked anything.”
(*Seerat Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 1, p. 623)

The world we live in is a place of tests and challenges. It is not possible to force the other side to accept terms exactly as we wish. In most situations, we must accept some of the other side’s conditions. Such acceptance is not surrender; it is wisdom—a way to create a starting point for progress. This is where true wisdom and strategy are tested. One must carefully examine the other side’s conditions and see where there is room that can be accepted, so that the path for building the future can be opened. This is exactly what the Prophet (ﷺ) did at Hudaibiyyah. With great insight, he understood this particular mindset of the Quraysh and used it very wisely. When the Quraysh blocked him at Hudaibiyyah, the message he sent to them included these words:

“We have not come to fight anyone; we have come only to perform ‘*umrah*. The war has

already exhausted the Quraysh and caused them great harm. If they wish, I will set a truce for a fixed time, and they can step aside between me and the other Arab tribes. If I prevail, then they may choose to enter this religion as others have done. And if I do not prevail, then their goal has been achieved.” (*Al-Seerah al-Nabawiyah* by Ibn Kathir, Vol. 3, p. 330)

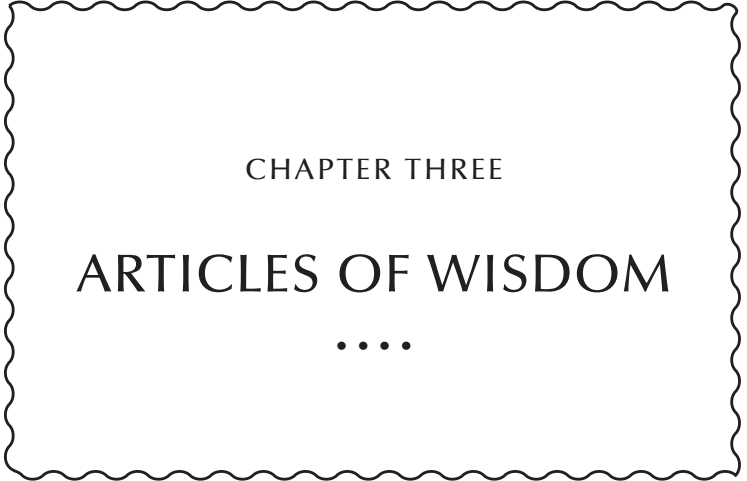
THE PRINCIPLE OF LIFE

Why does a person buy a car? For fast travel. The purpose of a car is to turn walking speed into running speed. But a car can only be called a proper car if it also knows how to stop. A car may look excellent, but if it has no braking system, no one would agree to buy it. The same rule that applies to travel on the road also applies to the journey of life. Only those people can succeed in life's journey who know how to stop as well as move. Those who only know how to move forward, who never think in terms of stopping or pausing, are like a car without brakes. And a car without brakes will always end up in a ditch. Such a car is never destined to reach its destination.

If your nature is such that you argue with anyone who speaks against you, or you treat someone who does not meet your expectations as an enemy and start fighting

him, then you are like a car without brakes. In such a case, you speak when you should remain silent, and you rush forward when you should hold back. The end of such a person in this world is nothing but ruin.

A wise person is one who saves his energy from being wasted in negative actions. He continues his journey without becoming entangled in the thorns along the road. In the language of the *Shariah*, this is called *i'raz* (turning away, avoidance). And *i'raz* is undoubtedly an essential principle of life. A person who has a clear goal, who is engaged in completing his plan, will inevitably adopt the way of *i'raz*. He will always keep his goal before him. But those who have no set goal will never understand the importance of *i'raz*. They will fight with others over trivial matters. They may think they are doing something important, but in reality, they are only wasting their energy.



CHAPTER THREE

ARTICLES OF WISDOM

...

THE MIND A TREASURE OF POWER

The human mind is an extraordinary system. Though smaller than an orange, it can record 800 memories every second and continue doing so for an average lifespan of seventy-five years.

Modern scientific research has revealed that once an idea enters the mind, it becomes a permanent part of it. Whatever information reaches the human brain is fully stored and never truly forgotten. Even if we cannot consciously recall all of it, everything remains preserved in the brain's permanent files.

If a computer were built with the same capacity as the human brain, its infrastructure would be so vast that it would fill a structure the size of the Empire State Building in New York—1,250 feet high and 102 stories tall. To operate such a supercomputer would require one billion watts of electrical power, and its cost would be beyond estimation.

As noted by a writer: "The brain is a fabulous mechanism. About the size of half a grapefruit, it can record 800 memories a second for the average 75 years many of us live, without exhausting itself. The human brain retains everything it takes in and never forgets anything. Even though we don't recall all the information received,

everything is on permanent file in our brain. If a computer to match the brain's potential was built, it would occupy space comparable to the size of the Empire State Building (1,250 feet tall) and need 1,000,000,000 watts of electrical power to run. The cost would be equally immense. The mind is one of God's most amazing gifts to man. Yet most people use only a small fraction of their mental ability. For many, the power remains largely untapped." (*The Plain Truth*, October 1988, p. 29)

The brain is indeed one of God's most astonishing gifts to humankind. Yet even the greatest scientists use only a fraction of its potential. The vast higher capacities of the human mind remain largely untapped.

A research article titled "Our Amazing Mind" was published in the September 1989 issue of the American magazine *Span*. Written by William F. Allman, Senior Editor of U.S. News & World Report, it explains that research on the brain has expanded so rapidly that it has become a separate scientific discipline known as "brain science." The discoveries made in this field represent nothing less than an explosion of knowledge.

One scientist has described the brain as a "thinking engine." Yet this description is far from adequate. The way in which the brain's hundred billion neurons work in perfect harmony, making distinctions between countless things in a fraction of a second, is beyond the capability

of any mechanical device. In its astonishing efficiency, a single human brain outweighs all the world's machines and computers combined.

“An explosion of recent findings in brain science—aided by new computer programs that can simulate brain cells in action—is now revealing that the brain is far more intricate than any mechanical device imaginable.” (p. 24)

Summarizing these modern findings, the author concludes:

“Though 20th-century scientists have tried to make machines that mimic the brain's functioning, even the most powerful supercomputer falls far short of the real thing.” (p. 28)

The human mind is an inexhaustible treasure of power—a treasure granted to every person by birth, freely and without effort. No one who possesses a mind can truly be called poor or weak, regardless of outward circumstances.

Within you lies the most powerful mechanism in existence—one for which there is no equal in the known universe. Use this immense reservoir of energy. Awaken the hidden possibilities within it. Then you will never again have reason to complain of failure.

Every person who has achieved greatness or success has done so by harnessing the power of the mind. That same divine power exists within you. In potential, you stand at the same threshold of achievement where every successful person once stood. Why, then, should there be despair or

complaint? Turn your potential into reality. Every height of success awaits you—rise to it, and take your place upon it.

OPPORTUNITIES NEVER END

A young American, Dewitt Wallace (1889–1981), decided to publish a monthly digest. He asked his father for \$300 as starting capital. But his father refused, saying Dewitt didn't know how to handle money and would waste it. Somehow, Dewitt managed to borrow a small amount from his brother, and in January 1920 he printed a sample issue with only a few hundred copies.

Then Dewitt faced another challenge. He showed his magazine to New York publishing houses and asked them to distribute it. But all of them refused, saying the magazine was “too serious” and that no market existed for such a publication.

This was a critical obstacle, because magazines usually reached readers through publishing houses—and they had all turned him down. Yet one possibility still remained for Dewitt: reaching buyers directly. He gathered addresses and began writing letters to people. At the same time, he placed advertisements in newspapers. Normally, it would have seemed impossible for a new, unknown magazine to gain subscribers this way. But Dewitt introduced one clever idea that turned the impossible into possible. In his

letters and advertisements, he included this offer:

“The subscription could be cancelled and all money refunded if the reader wasn’t satisfied.”

The result was that subscription requests and money orders began to arrive. Right from the start, he collected enough money to publish two issues without difficulty.

Dewitt’s plan worked. Not a single person cancelled, and no one asked for a refund. He increased his efforts to reach more readers. By February 1922, his magazine had reached a circulation of one thousand. From there it kept growing, and by 1987 it was publishing more than 28 million copies, in 15 languages, across 139 editions. This was the magazine the world now knows as *Reader’s Digest*. It became the most widely read magazine in the world. By 1980, Dewitt and his wife had a fortune of fifty billion dollars.

Dewitt won subscribers by making his magazine, in effect, “risk-free.” Anyone could subscribe without fear of losing money. But this strategy only worked because of another factor: quality. Without quality, the first idea would only have led to failure.

This second factor was maintaining high standards—producing a magazine so well-prepared that readers felt it was truly worth their money, and wanted to continue subscribing.

To achieve this, Dewitt worked extremely hard. His magazine was a digest—a selection of published articles.

To prepare these selections, Dewitt read more than forty magazines every day, some bought and others in libraries. This exhausting work even drew mockery; many people dismissively called him a “scissors-and-paste editor.” But he ignored the criticism and kept going.

Dewitt Wallace’s biographer summed up the secret of his success in these words:

“What made him supernormal was his intense, sustained curiosity, plus an unequalled capacity for work.”

One of his friends also said of him:

“He listens far more than he talks.”

This story shows that the world is full of opportunities and possibilities—so many that the list never ends. Whenever one possibility is blocked, a person must immediately look for another. If he does, he will find that even where circumstances seem to guarantee failure, a new and greater possibility is waiting—one that can once again lead him to success.

THE MIRACLE OF SERVICE

In *Reader’s Digest* (June 1989), a striking report was published. It was written by an Indian journalist, Mr. Ashok Mahadevan, who traveled from India to Karachi. After closely studying the situation, he compiled a detailed report that appeared in that issue of the magazine.

The report tells the story of a man from Karachi named Abdul Sattar Edhi. Over forty years of service, he earned extraordinary respect and affection in his community. In Mr. Mahadevan's words, even Karachi's criminals respect him. Once, when a gunfight broke out between the police and a gang of bandits on the city's outskirts, Edhi immediately drove to the scene in an ambulance. As soon as he arrived, the bandits stopped firing. Edhi quickly lifted the body of a sub-inspector and placed it in his vehicle. The bandits waited impatiently for him to leave, signaling with their hands for him to go back. Once he had departed, they resumed firing at the police.

How did a man reach such a position, where even criminals lowered their guns at his presence? The reason was not his name, Abdul Sattar. Nor was it because of protests, demands, rallies, or speeches. There was only one reason: service to humanity. Through forty years of selfless work, Abdul Sattar Edhi won a place where even outlaws bowed before him.

Abdul Sattar Edhi, aged 55, was a Pakistani migrant. In 1947, he left Gujarat and moved to Karachi. At first, he worked in a shop that sold clothes and medicines. He often witnessed situations where a patient or accident victim desperately needed an ambulance, but because no ambulance arrived on time, the person died in agony. This gave him the idea of starting a charitable ambulance service.

In 1950, using donated funds, he bought a second-hand truck, converted it into a simple ambulance, and began serving the sick and injured. His work expanded. Today, he has a fleet of 245 ambulances. He provides free services to the poor and disabled, both within and outside Karachi. His welfare organization serves thousands of Pakistanis every day. In addition to ambulances, he runs maternity homes, blood banks, X-ray clinics, laboratories, nursing schools, orphanages, and homes for the disabled. He has also sent aid abroad—for example, \$53,000 to Ethiopia, \$66,000 to Palestine, \$10,000 to Bangladesh, and help to other countries in need. He now plans to launch an air ambulance service and establish other major institutions, such as a modern hospital and even an animal hospital.

His annual budget is about 100 million rupees, entirely raised through public donations. Once, former President Zia-ul-Haq sent him a check for 500,000 rupees. Edhi returned it, saying that this work was for the people and should be funded by the people. He lives very simply in a two-room flat. People trust him so deeply that they donate large sums without being asked. They say, “We are certain that any money given to him will be used properly.”

In 1986, he received the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service. Until then, Abdul Sattar Edhi had been known as a local figure. This award gave him international

recognition. He thus joined the distinguished list of great humanitarians, in which, until then, only Mother Teresa was widely known. Although Mother Teresa's work is vast and she has even received the Nobel Prize, Abdul Sattar Edhi is probably the first Muslim who gave such remarkable proof of humanitarian service that he was acknowledged worldwide.

Such work cannot be done as a profession. It requires a deep compassion for God's creation. This is what Mother Teresa and Abdul Sattar Edhi share. Mother Teresa has said:

"I see God in every human being."

The same was true for Abdul Sattar Edhi. In reply to a question by Mr. Mahadevan, Edhi said:

"I see God in them."

The Blessing of Service

The reward for helping others is gaining the love of people. This rule isn't limited to any one country—it applies everywhere. Those who dedicate themselves to serving humanity find great inner peace and earn a place of respect and love in people's hearts. Their sincerity is so strong that even enemies become friends, and even the most dangerous criminals put down their weapons when they see them.

TOLERANCE: THE WAY OF NATURE

Tolerance (forbearance, patience) is a universal principle of nature. The lion and the elephant are both very large animals. They can be considered rivals. Yet they live together in the same jungle. This is possible only because of tolerance. It has often been observed that when an elephant comes from one side and a lion from the other, both quietly continue on their way without clashing. If they did not show tolerance toward each other, they would fight until both were destroyed.

Nature has taught this principle to both the lion and the elephant. In the same way, it has placed within the human body a built-in system of tolerance. In medical science, this is known as biological tolerance—the capacity of a living organism to come into contact with a substance, or to have it introduced into the body, without suffering any harmful effects:

“In biology, the ability of an organism to endure contact with a substance, or its introduction into the body, without ill effects.” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 10, p. 31)

The entire system of treating illness depends on this ability of the body. When a person is sick, medicines are introduced that, in general, are harmful. Yet, despite being highly sensitive to outside substances, the body tolerates

such medicines. It deals with them patiently. Because of this “biological tolerance,” these medicines can enter the body and take effect. They act on the sick organ and heal it without harming the other organs.

The same principle of tolerance is needed in human society. What animals in the jungle do by instinct, and what the human body does by natural design, is exactly what human beings must do with conscious choice. They must deliberately adopt tolerance in order to live with others peacefully.

Whenever people live together, complaints and disagreements are bound to arise. This happens within a single family. It happens in society. It happens in a whole nation. And it happens at the international level too. Wherever human beings meet and form relations, unpleasant situations are inevitable.

What should be done in such circumstances? Tolerance is the answer. In such times, one person must deal with another, and one group with another, with patience and forbearance. This is the only practical way for people to live together and move forward together. Without this spirit, human civilization cannot be built or developed.

Tolerance is not a passive attitude; it is plain realism. It does not mean that someone had a better choice but, out of weakness, accepted a lesser one. The truth is that in today’s world, no other choice exists for us. Tolerance is a practical necessity, not a moral weakness.

It often happens that a person finds a situation unpleasant and begins to fight it—only to end up in ruin. Why does this happen? Because, out of short-sightedness, the person believes the choice is between what is pleasant and unpleasant. He fights the unpleasant in the hope of gaining the pleasant.

But the outcome shows that the choice was not between pleasant and unpleasant. It was between unpleasant and destructive. In reality, it is very rare in this world that a person's choice lies between pleasant and unpleasant. More often, the choice is between less unpleasant and more unpleasant. In such cases, wisdom means accepting the less unpleasant to avoid the greater one.

Most people destroy themselves because of this misunderstanding. They take action, thinking it will remove an undesirable situation and bring about a desirable one. But when the present situation ends, they discover that the new situation contains the same unpleasantness in even greater measure—the very thing they could not tolerate in smaller measure before.

This is the wisdom called tolerance. In this world, patience leads a person toward life, while impatience leads only toward death.

Tolerance gives us the chance to act. It allows us to adjust to unfavourable circumstances and still continue our journey of life in a balanced way. On the other hand, if we abandon

tolerance and fight everything that seems unfavourable, the only result will be that we destroy one “evil” by name, only to fall into another, even worse evil.

If the lion and the elephant did not tolerate each other, both would invite their own death. But when they accept each other, both gain the chance to live. This is the greatest benefit of tolerance. Tolerance gives you the chance to act. It provides the opportunity to achieve something. And without doubt, the greatest thing in this world is the chance to act. To lose this chance is destruction; to gain it and use it is success.

A MISUNDERSTANDING

Once I went to a village and saw a man cut down a neem tree. Afterward, he began stripping the bark from its trunk.

“Why are you removing the bark?” I asked him.
He smiled and replied, “If the bark isn’t removed, worms will get inside and spoil the wood.”

This was in 1965. Ten years later, in August 1975, I visited another village. There I saw the trunk of a neem tree that had been cut down but still had its bark. This reminded me of the earlier incident, and I thought I would test whether the villager’s words had been correct. I asked a man from

that household to bring a tool and peel off the bark. When he did, I saw thick worms, about an inch long, under the bark. They were very soft, but they had chewed into the surface of the trunk, leaving deep channels across it.

This is how nature works. Nature teaches us that life in this world must be lived with great care. The order of the world is such that a single mistake can wipe out all your strengths. One lapse is enough to destroy all your opportunities. Nature could have protected the neem trunk even without removing the bark, but instead it set a rule: the owner must strip the bark, and only then will the trunk remain safe.

This same law applies to human life, because the rules of nature also govern the world of people.

In 1944, two men from Jaunpur (U.P.) started a business together. Their starting capital was only a few hundred rupees. But God blessed their joint venture, and in six years their business grew to a value of 30,000 rupees. Then disputes arose between them, and eventually they decided to part ways. On the advice of an arbitrator, it was agreed not to divide the business itself, but to assess its value and split it accordingly—one man would take half the value in cash, while the other would take the assets. That is what happened: one man received the goods, and the other received 15,000 rupees in cash.

In 1949, fifteen thousand rupees was equal to several lakhs today. The man who took the cash opened a cloth shop

in a Jaunpur market. From the start, he found excellent opportunities, and within a year his capital had doubled. In the second year of business, he had entered a stage where a wide door to growth and success had opened before him.

But then a weakness slowly crept in. He became careless with his spending. His expenses on himself, his family, and his friends grew without limit. He forgot that of the one thousand rupees he took in from a day's sales, only ten percent truly belonged to him; the remaining ninety percent belonged to the supplier. Yet he began to spend as if the entire amount was his income—just as a lawyer treats the full fee he receives as his own.

Such extravagance cannot continue in shopkeeping. The result was that within a few years he was bankrupt. Not a single rupee of the fifteen thousand remained.

After this, he lived for about fifteen years but was unable to restart any business. Someone advised him to perform a chilla (a spiritual retreat), saying this would solve his problems. He did so, but breaking the laws of nature cannot be corrected by a chilla. His situation only worsened, until finally, in 1971, in a state of distress, he was struck by a jeep and died on the road.

One mistake in life can ruin all opportunities and push a person to the very edge of failure.

This rule applies to all matters of life. With every neem tree there is a worm. With every matter there is a weakness

attached. A person must guard against these weaknesses with the utmost care. In any matter where he is negligent, the weakness will take effect and spoil the whole affair.

If the owner of a neem tree were to protest against the insects that infest it, such a protest would never stop them from burrowing into its trunk. The presence of those insects exists by the permission of nature's law—and whatever operates under that law cannot be eliminated.

In the same way, the “insects” that appear in the affairs of human life also exist by the decree of nature. They are bound to remain. To raise waves of protest or complaint against them is entirely futile. What we must do is seek means of protection, not waste our energy in protest.

Protection is one of the fundamental principles of life in this world. Only those survive who take care to safeguard themselves. Those who become heedless of their own protection will find, in God's world, nothing but ruin.

BOUNDLESS POSSIBILITIES

On my trip to Afghanistan in October 1988, I came across something interesting I had never seen before. In simple terms, people called it a “fish.” It was a countermeasure used against the dangerous American-made Stinger missile. The process of using this device was known as flare fishing.

After Russian forces entered Afghanistan in December 1979, a constant war broke out between them and the Afghan Mujahideen. The Mujahideen only had ground forces, while the Russians used helicopters to fly over and bomb their positions.

This was a very difficult situation. The Mujahideen tried to shoot down the planes with guns, but bullets travel in a straight line. Hitting something moving so fast in the air was nearly impossible. Despite their efforts, the Mujahideen could not bring down many Russian bombers.

At that point, America supplied the Mujahideen with a modern anti-aircraft missile known as the Stinger. With it, the Mujahideen gained clear superiority over Russian bombers. Whenever they spotted a Russian plane, they would fire a Stinger. The missile would chase and eventually strike the aircraft, because unlike a bullet, the Stinger doesn't fly straight. It changes direction in pursuit of the plane until it hits its target. Earlier, the Mujahideen were on the defensive, but now the Russian air force was forced into defense. Yet this world is full of possibilities—no invention rules out the chance of a bigger one. Soon the Russians discovered a way to counter the Stinger, which they called flare fishing. They found out that the Stinger works by chasing heat. Since the hottest part of a plane is its engine, the missile locks on to it and destroys the aircraft.

To counter this, the Russians developed flare fishing. This was a special chemical substance that, when released from the plane, burst into flames and produced a bright flare. The flare burned hotter than the engine. So instead of hitting the plane, the Stinger was diverted and collided with the flare. In this way, the plane was saved.

There is an important lesson in this event: success comes from discovering and exploiting the opponent's weakness. In a world of competition, those who succeed are the ones who can identify the weaknesses of the other side and make use of them.

The Russians showed this ability. They took advantage of the fact that the Stinger had no human intelligence. Its strike was not conscious but mechanical. Being a device, it could not recognize a plane—it could only detect “heat.” As soon as the Russians discovered this secret, they had already won half the battle. The use of flare fishing against the Stinger was a successful example of this strategy.

The truth is that everything in this world has a countermeasure. Against every danger, the possibilities are always greater—provided a person does not lose courage when facing problems. By using the intelligence God has given, one can always discover a way out.

This is exactly what a Hadith says: “One hardship can never overcome two reliefs” (*Shu‘ab al-Iman* by al-Bayhaqi, Hadith No. 9541). In other words, if difficulty is one, ease is double. If one path is blocked, another remains open.

In such situations, complaining and protesting are not only useless but also show a lack of trust in God. This lessens God's greatness. A person who complains suffers two losses: first, he misses the chance to turn failure into success again; second, he becomes guilty in God's eyes for daring to call a perfect world flawed.

The reality is that this world is a place of boundless possibilities. No past mistake can destroy future opportunities. No enemy action can end the chance of a better response. After every loss, the opportunity remains to try again and succeed.

A person should look forward rather than dwell on the past. They should work to recover what they have lost after each setback and regain their position through effort and determination.

A MODEL MINORITY

People from Asian countries who live in the United States are known as Asian Americans. They began settling here around 1965, mostly coming from China, Korea, Indochina, and similar countries. When they first arrived, many of them could not even hold a simple conversation in English.

Today, however, according to a report in Reader's Digest,

they have become the best students in America's best English-language schools. Although they make up only 2 percent of the overall population, they have managed to secure as much as 20 percent of positions in various American institutions. Wherever they go, they prove to be more capable—sometimes even overqualified.

This situation has forced American thinkers to reflect. As a result, formal research was carried out, and the findings were published in several American as well as international journals. Some references are as follows:

1. *New York Times*, New York, August 3, 1986
2. Why Asian Americans are doing so well, *Times Magazine*, New York, August 31, 1987
3. Why Asian American students excel, *Reader's Digest*, August 1987
4. Why Asian succeed in America, *Span* monthly, December 1987
5. Among the top 6 science students of the United States, *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, August 30, 1987.

Why are Asian Americans ahead of ordinary American youth in almost every field of education? The reason is simple: they put in more effort than American youth. Jerome Kagan, a professor of psychology at Harvard University, was once asked why Asian American students tend to be more successful than American students. According to a

Time report, his answer was straightforward:

To put it plainly, they work harder.

For them, education is a “ticket to success.” And in fact, the American education system has proven to be just that—a sure ticket to success. The price they paid for this ticket can be summed up in one word: excellence.

Through this effort, they earned the reputation of being a “model minority” in America. But the road was not open and easy for them. They faced racial prejudice and degrading treatment. American youth mocked them, calling them the “yellow peril,” and at times even resorted to physical violence. Yet Asian Americans did not respond with anger or retaliation. They avoided complaint and protest entirely. Their only answer was to work even harder. Parents protected their children from reacting emotionally and instead channeled their energy into greater effort. In Asian families, education became almost an obsession. At home, if a son scored 80 percent, he would be asked why he didn’t get 85. If he scored 85, his father would remind him that 90 was possible.

When a community faces problems, there are generally two ways to try to solve them. One way, as seen in India, is to demand and protest. This approach creates two problems at once. First, the original issue becomes even more complicated instead of being resolved. In this world,

everything is achieved through action, not demands. Trying to get something through demands, when it is otherwise gained through effort, only pushes it further away. Second, such a group loses respect in the eyes of others. To demand and protest is to shift the burden of one's problems onto others, and whoever does that ends up being looked down upon.

The opposite example is that of Asian Americans in the United States. They chose to solve their problems by accepting full responsibility themselves. Despite provocation, they refused to get provoked. While staying completely peaceful, they worked harder than others. Their experience shows that this approach not only solved their problems fully but also allowed them to gain a share in society greater than their numbers.

Taking a negative approach means pushing the burden of one's problems onto others, while a positive approach means accepting responsibility oneself. The added advantage of a positive approach is that such people do not create complications in society. Thus, when Asian Americans adopted a positive way to solve their problems, they also brought further benefits to American society.

The first benefit was that they created a spirit of competition among American youth. Many young Americans, feeling secure, had begun to slack off. But they now realized that if they wanted to survive and progress, they too would have to work harder like the Asians.

According to *Time* magazine, even American intellectuals acknowledged that Asian Americans had overcome American youth's indifference and revitalized their spirit. They admitted that "Their presence is going to be a great blessing for society." (p. 53).

A *Span* magazine report (December 1987) quoted a middle-aged New Yorker as saying: Thank God for the Asians. They are bringing back standards to our schools (p. 32).

Asian Americans gained another advantage when they achieved economic respectability: their culture also began to be viewed with honour. Their national traditions started to be respected by Americans. These Asian Americans regard Confucius as their spiritual leader. When one admirable quality of Asian Americans became clear to Americans, they associated that trait with their national sage, Confucius. The exemplary conduct of Asian Americans brought attention to their religion and culture within American society. According to a *Span* magazine report, the president of New York University stated that:

"When I look at our Asian-American students, I am certain that much of their success is due to Confucianism." (p.32)

In direct competition with ordinary Americans, Asian immigrants often proved to be overqualified. In this way, they became a challenge and a motivation for Americans. They inspired a new spirit of hard work among American youth. Because Asian immigrants solved their own problems

in a positive way, they ended up helping American society solve its problems too.

In just one generation, Asian immigrants achieved the success that usually takes three generations. Their extraordinary progress gave rise to a new phrase in America: Asian work ethic. Now it is said that if you want real advancement, adopt the Asian work ethic.

The same door is wide open for Indian Muslims as well. If Muslims let go of the communal disputes into which their shallow leaders have needlessly dragged them, and instead start building their lives on the eternal principles of Islam, they too could become a force for change in this country. In doing so, Muslims would not only solve their own problems but also give the nation a new standard—something that could be summed up as the Muslim work ethic. When that happens, Muslims will become an asset to the country, instead of being a liability as they are today.

So far, Muslims in India have remained busy running demand-based movements in search of a “cultural identity.” In my view, all such efforts are completely useless, because cultural identity is established through inner strength—it cannot be gained by making demands.

The more correct approach is for Muslims to aim for moral identity. They should make the adoption of Islamic ethics their mark of distinction. If Muslims are able to establish their identity on moral grounds, then they will naturally

gain the cultural identity they are seeking—without wasting energy on demand-based campaigns. The news report is given below.

Ticket To Success

No matter what their route, young Asian Americans, largely those with Chinese, Korean and Indochinese backgrounds, are setting the educational pace for the rest of America and cutting a dazzling figure at the country's finest schools.

Trying to explain why so many Asian American students are super achievers, Harvard Psychology Professor Jerome Kagan comes up with this simple answer: "To put it plainly, they work harder." "Even with the problems (of restriction and discrimination), many Asian-American students are making the U.S. education system work better for them than it has for any other immigrant group since the arrival of the East European Jews began in the 1880s. Like the Asians, the Jews viewed education as the ticket to success. Both groups feel an obligation to excel intellectually," says News York University Mathematician Sylvain Cappell, who, as a Jewish immigrant, feels a kinship with his Asian-American students. The two groups share a powerful belief in the value of hard work and a zealous regard for the role of the family. Such achievements are reflected in the nation's best universities, where math, science and engineering departments have taken on a decidedly Asian character. At the University of Washington 20% of all

engineering students are of Asian descent; at Berkeley the figure is 40%. To win these places Asian-American students make the SAT seem as easy as taking a driving test. The average math score of Asian American high school seniors in 1985 was 518 (of a possible 800), 43 points higher than the general average.

A telling measure of parental attention is homework. A 1984 study of San Francisco-area schools by Stanford Sociologist Sanford Dornbusch found that Asian-American students put in an average of eleven hours a week, compared with seven hours by other students. Some Asian Americans may be pushing their children too hard. Says a Chinese-American high schools in New York City; "When you get an 80, they say, 'Why not an 85? If you get an 85, it's 'Why not a 90?' 'Years ago,' complains Virginia Kee, a high school teacher in New York's Chinatown, "they used to think you were Fu Manchu or Charlie Chan. Then they thought you must own a laundry or restaurant. Now they think all we know how to do is sit in front of a computer." The image of Asian Americans is as relentless bookworms. "If you are weak in math or science and find yourself assigned to a class with a majority of Asian Kids, the only thing to do is transfer to a different section," says a Yale sophomore.

The performance of Asian Americans also triggers resentment and tension. "Anti-Asian activity in the form of violence, vandalism, harassment and intimidation

continues to occur across the nation,” the U.S. Civil Rights Commission declared last year. Young immigrant Asians complain that they are constantly threatened. To some Asian Americans, being only “very good” is tantamount to failure. “It seems to me that having people like this renews our own striving for excellence,” observes Emmy Werner, professor of human development at the University of California at Davis. “We shouldn’t be threatened but challenged.” Mathematician Cappell is thrilled by the new inheritors. “Their presence,” he says, “is going to be a great blessing for society.”

SOLUTION-ORIENTED POLICY

Perhaps the most important event of 1988 was the understanding reached between the Soviet Union and the United States, which *Time* magazine (May 30, 1988) aptly described as the “grand compromise.” The Soviet Union and the United States are both regarded as the world’s superpowers. For seventy years, they had been locked in fierce rivalry, each following a policy of confrontation. Their press and media worked mainly to accuse and condemn each other. But after long experience, both sides are now speaking of peace instead of conflict. Instead of pouring energy into an arms race, they are focusing on dialogue. They are moving away from rivalry and turning toward reconciliation.

A Soviet official described this new approach as a “solution-oriented policy.” Previously, all their attention was on proving the other side wrong. Now they are ignoring such distractions and concentrating on how to solve problems. This change between the Soviet Union and the United States offers a powerful lesson for other nations. In today’s world, the policy of conflict and confrontation has become so costly that even great powers can no longer sustain it. Then how can smaller nations afford to engage in such a destructive pursuit?

A Turn Toward Realism

Nikita Khrushchev was Prime Minister of the Soviet Union from 1958 to 1964. Addressing the capitalist world, he made his famous remark:

We will bury you (*Hindustan Times*, June 28, 1988).

Similarly, in 1983, U.S. President Ronald Reagan called the Soviet Union an “evil empire.” American officials declared that they would push communist Russia into the sea. But seventy years after the communist revolution, in 1988, both countries were finally forced to change their thinking. Soviet leaders began traveling to the United States for talks. Ronald Reagan himself visited Moscow (June 28 to July 2, 1988)—something he had once thought impossible. Before his visit, he said in Washington:

U.S. relations with Moscow must be guided by realism (*Hindustan Times*, May 26, 1988).

For forty years, the two countries had been engaged in an arms race, each producing the most dangerous weapons in history to destroy the other. But now, they are placing restrictions on those very weapons and even dismantling them. *The Times of India* (August 3, 1988, Section 2, p.1) carried a report with the headline:

USSR destroys 4 missiles

The report stated that on August 2, 1988, the Soviet Union destroyed four short-range missiles (OTR-22) at Saryozek. The event was witnessed by observers from various countries, including India and the United States. The destruction was carried out under the agreement signed between Reagan and Gorbachev.

According to this agreement, the Soviet Union will, over the next three years, dismantle 1,752 missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers. The United States, under the same agreement, will dismantle 859 missiles of the same type.

The reason behind this dramatic change in U.S. and Soviet policies is that the pursuit of weapons and military dominance had stalled both countries' progress. After spending half a century in an arms race and in a blame-oriented policy, they realized that such a negative course had brought them no real benefit. On the contrary, in trying to outdo one another, they had pushed themselves to the brink of destruction. That is why they have now

abandoned the old policy and chosen to adopt a solution-oriented one.

America and Russia

America devoted all its strength to building a war machine. As a result, it fell behind in the economic field—even compared to its defeated country, Japan. Today, America is the largest debtor nation. It has an external debt of 400 billion dollars, while Japan has become the largest creditor nation, having lent 240 billion dollars to the world. The American dollar, which for half a century had stood as the ruler of the economic world, has suffered serious damage to that status. So much so that the question began to arise: can America continue to maintain its position as a superpower? (For details, see *Time*, July 4, 1988).

In an interview (*The Times of India*, August 9, 1988), Dr. Henry Kissinger said that a new basic reality has appeared—that some new powers have emerged on the global stage, such as China and India. Japan is becoming more and more powerful with each passing day. In such a situation, America will have to abandon its policy of ignoring other nations. It is essential for America to adjust to the new centers of power:

“US will have to adjust with new power centres.”

The 19th All-Soviet Party Conference was held in Moscow in the last week of June 1988, attended by five thousand

delegates from all over the country. On this occasion, the Soviet Prime Minister, Mikhail Gorbachev, delivered a three-and-a-half-hour speech. In this long address, he strongly advocated self-criticism. A summary of his speech can be found in the *The Times of India* (June 29, 1988, page 11).

Mr. Quentin Peel, who participated in the conference as a journalist, listened to the speeches of the Soviet leaders and met them personally. He summed up Prime Minister Gorbachev's three-and-a-half-hour address in these words:

“The message seemed plain enough: the party would have to renounce its stifling role in the administration and economy of the country. Power and privilege would have to be curbed, science and initiative given their head, if the Soviet Union were to compete with the rest of the world, let alone be a superpower.”

The message, at first glance, was very simple. The Communist Party would have to give up its tight control over administration, the economy, and the country itself. Limits on power and privilege would have to end. Science and initiative would need to be encouraged if the Soviet Union wanted not only to compete with the rest of the world, but also to remain a superpower.

Perestroika

These circumstances forced the Russian Prime Minister, Mikhail Gorbachev, to face reality. Abandoning the

old tone of communist superiority, he launched a new campaign of reform in Russia, which he summed up in two words. One was *glasnost*—a Russian word meaning “openness.” The other was *perestroika*—a Russian word meaning “restructuring.” Under this title, Mr. Gorbachev also published a book, whose English name is:

Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World.

Through this movement, revolutionary changes were introduced into Russia’s former communist system. These changes ranged from granting religious freedom to building friendly relations with its traditional enemy, the United States. On this subject, many thought-provoking reports appeared in newspapers. One such report was released by the Los Angeles and Washington Post News Service. *Hindustan Times* (16 January 1988) published it under the name of Roy Gutman, with the following title:

Kremlin, White House Now Realistic (p. 20).

The report explained that, after recent events, relations between Russia and the United States had undergone a historic shift. A new way of thinking had developed in both countries. Both the Kremlin and the White House were becoming more realistic in dealing with one another. We reproduce that report below.

Kremlin, White House Now Realistic

By Roy Gutman

Moscow: A high Soviet official, ascribing a dramatic change in approach to the Reagan Administration, says US policy-makers now constitute a Pragmatic "team" that is "solution-oriented" and can work well with Mr. Mikhail S. Gorbachev's new foreign policy.

"You have realistically minded people on both sides at the moment, in the Kremlin and in the White House, that team and our team... are solution-oriented," said Mr. Bessmertnykh, who oversees Soviet relations with the United States.

Mr. Bessmertnykh, a veteran diplomat who served 12 years in the United States and is known as a leading exponent of pragmatism, emphasised that the summit affirmed a historic shift in US-Soviet relations.

He asserted that an agreement on a treaty sharply cutting offensive nuclear arms is still possible this year, despite a number of unresolved issues.

Mr. Bessmertnykh also claimed that Mr. Gorbachev's new offer on conventional forces was "the most practical offer ever made." Under the offer, NATO and the Warsaw Pact would exchange data on each other's forces, verify the data on-site and reduce deployments where one side had superiority. He said Regan was non-committal, but Mr. Bessmertnykh urged the United state to give the idea serious consideration.

Mr. Bessmertnykh said changed attitudes on both sides had facilitated progress toward settling regional disputes where the United States and Soviet Union had been an influence. These disputes involved such places as Afghanistan, the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, Southern Africa, and Kampuchea. In the Soviet Union, the attitude change encompasses Mr. Gorbachev's "new thinking" in foreign policy, which calls for political solutions based on a "balance of interests" of all the involved parties, and in the United States, a readiness by the Reagan Administration to discuss issues on this basis.

When Mr. Reagan came to office, the administration used phrases such as "we shall draw the line, we shall go to the source, we shall stop the advance of communism..."

But eight years later, "look at the situation," he said, "the fleet was concentrated in the Persian Gulf. What was the result?" Mr. Bessmertnykh said, "Practical minded people" in the administration "realise the world has changed." You can't do it anymore that way. "It's impossible."

Just three years ago, when Mr. Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev met in Geneva at their first summit, the US aim in the Middle East was "Pushing the Soviet Union into the sea from the Middle East," he said. The Administration has dropped this "arrogant but

very unrealistic policy,” Bessmertnykh said. (*The Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post News Service*).

Russia’s Deputy Foreign Minister, Alexander Bessmertnykh, who had served as ambassador in the United States for 12 years, gave an interview to Newsday. He said that “new thinking” had taken root in both countries. Their relationship was undergoing a dramatic change and a historic shift. Earlier, American officials used to say, “We will stop the spread of communism; we will drown them in the sea.” But now they had realized this was impossible. In the past, both sides spent their time condemning and trying to undercut each other. But that policy proved completely useless. Now, people on both sides were becoming realistic. Both their team and ours, he said, had begun to think in terms of solutions:

“That team and our team are solution-oriented.”

What are the aims and goals of perestroika? Mr. Gorbachev explained them in typical communist language as: “More democracy and more socialism; a better life for the working man; greater glory, progress, and prosperity for the nation.” But in truth, perestroika was a retreat from socialism, not the “next step” toward it. For according to Marx and Lenin, socialism could advance only after the death of capitalism. Every step forward for socialism meant a step backward for capitalism. Yet today, under Gorbachev’s leadership, Soviet Russia was making peace with capitalism—in fact, it was dreaming of progress and prosperity by adopting its values.

Perestroika does not prove the truth of socialism's principles. It proves that success in this world is not possible without recognizing reality. In Reagan's words: on this earth, we must live with all people, both good and bad. Realism and reconciliation are the true keys to progress and success in this world.

Conclusion

The change in relations between Russia and the United States is without doubt a very significant event. In modern history, it carries an important lesson. This event makes it clear that in today's world, the policy of confrontation has completely lost its value. Blaming one's rival, constantly trying to counter them, or engaging in conflict with them—even for powers like Russia and the United States—has proven entirely useless. How then could weaker nations hope to achieve any real results by following such negative policies?

Whether it is a matter of an individual or of a nation, the solution lies in the same approach. In this world, wisdom means focusing on building oneself instead of destroying others. To raise an issue only to make noise about it, or to launch a fight against an opponent in its name, is nothing more than a waste of time and energy. It leads to no other outcome. In short, the secret of progress and success lies in a solution-oriented policy, not in a blame-oriented policy.

THIS IS NOT ISLAM

During one Ramadan, a riot broke out in a place. On December 25, 1987, I met a man from that area and asked him about the incident. He told me it happened at night. Muslims were praying Tarawih in the mosque when they suddenly heard noise from the street. A wedding procession from another community was passing by, stopping in places to sing and play music. Some Muslims came out of the mosque and told them, "Please don't make noise here, we are offering prayers inside." But they refused to listen. An argument followed, and eventually it turned into a riot.

I said to him, "This is how you responded. Now let me tell you how the Prophet of Islam dealt with such situations." I explained, "You know that in the early days, Makkah and the Kaaba were under the control of non-Muslims of Quraysh. They used to trouble the Prophet and his companions in many ways. One example was this: whenever the Prophet and his companions went to the Kaaba, the polytheists would make noise. They would whistle and clap, saying, 'This is our way of worship.' The Quran says: "Their prayers at the Sacred House are nothing but whistling and clapping of hands. 'So taste the punishment because of your denial.'" (8:35)

Commentaries on this verse explain it as follows:

Ibn Umar, a Companion of the Prophet, said that the non-believers of Makkah would put their cheeks on the ground, clap, and whistle. Mujahid said they did this to disrupt the Prophet's prayer, while Al-Zuhri said they did it to mock the believers. (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 4, p. 52)

Tafsir al-Nasafi says they would circumambulate the Kaaba naked, interlock their fingers, whistle, and clap. They especially did this when the Prophet recited the Quran in prayer, trying to confuse him. (Vol. 1, p. 644)

Safwat al-Tafasir states that the non-believers' worship at the Sacred House consisted of nothing but whistling and clapping. They did this whenever Muslims prayed, in order to disturb them. (Vol. 1, p. 467)

Tafsir al-Mazhari says Sa'id reported that the Quraysh opposed the Prophet during circumambulation. They mocked him, whistled, and clapped. Muqatil said that when the Prophet prayed in the Sacred Mosque, two men would stand on his right and whistle, while two men stood on his left and clapped, all to disrupt his prayer. (Vol. 4, p. 63)

The Prophet lived in Makkah for 13 years, and throughout that time he faced this kind of behaviour. Yet not once did he protest or retaliate. He endured it all patiently. A group of devoted and courageous believers had already gathered around him, but never did the Prophet lead them in any attack on the idolaters, nor did he instruct them to stop the noise through confrontation.

The Prophet's silence was not out of fear but out of purpose. The law of life is that to achieve one goal, you must give up another. The Prophet's mission was to deliver God's message, and so he avoided disputes and clashes. He chose to ignore all these disturbances and focused entirely on spreading the message of Islam. Eventually, God changed the circumstances. The noise of the opponents came to an end themselves.

In the Prophet's time, noise was created inside the mosque itself, yet neither he nor his companions ever retaliated. Today, however, if a noisy procession passes by a mosque on the street, Muslims are quick to come out and fight. If Islam is what the Prophet practised, then what Muslims are doing today is not Islam. And if Islam is what Muslims are doing today, then what the Prophet practiced was not Islam. Muslims must now decide which of the two they wish to follow.

REALISM WINS

The cover of *Time* magazine (February 13, 1989) carried the bold headline: "Comrades Again." It was well known that although China and Russia were both communist countries, they had been at odds for at least 30 years. Now, the two nations were moving closer. The cover story of that issue focused on this change. Inside, the headline read:

“To mend a rift — An era of hostility is coming to an end.”

China and Russia share a 4,500-mile border, yet for three decades their relations remained strained. In 1959, after returning from a trip to the United States, former Soviet Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev made a brief stop in China and met Mao Zedong. That meeting ended badly. From then on, no senior official from either country visited the other. After this long stretch of hostility, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze visited Beijing in February 1989. The declared purpose of the trip was “peace and development.” One outcome of the visit was the announcement that the Soviet Prime Minister Mikhail Gorbachev would soon travel to China (*Time*, February 13, 1989).

Commenting on this surprising shift between two rivals, a Chinese official said:

“The difficulties that Beijing and Moscow now confront have brought us closer to one another.”
(p. 7)

A Russian official expressed the same thought even more openly:

“We are very close to understanding how new relations should develop. We have both made mistakes in the past.” (p. 6)

When China and Russia realized that their hostility was harming them both, they decided to end their pointless

conflict and establish friendly ties. To reach this decision, they had to admit their past mistakes. They agreed to drop their demands against each other. They chose to accept what had once seemed unacceptable—so they could build a better future. This is what is called realism. Without such realism, success in today's world is not possible.

The United States, Russia, and China are among the most powerful nations in the world today. When even these major powers can only survive through realism and reconciliation, how can weaker nations expect to thrive by pursuing a policy of confrontation? In such situations, the path of realism and reconciliation becomes even more essential for weaker nations than for the powerful ones. The report is reproduced below.

New Spirit of Cooperation

UNITED NATIONS, December 6, 1988.

NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV, the last Soviet communist party leader to address the general assembly, pounded a shoe on his desk and assured Americans that “we will bury you.” Mr Mikhail Gorbachev’s arrival 28 years later starkly underscores the transformation in the U.S.-Soviet relations since he took control of the party. In diplomatic circles today, the talk is of cooperation, mutual interests, and multilateral diplomacy. Confrontation between the capitalist and socialist systems has taken a back seat. U.S. tycoons who Mr Gorbachev and his staff hinted at a visit

to Wall Street, the antithesis of Soviet ideology. In 1960, Khrushchev was enraged over the then UN secretary-general, Mr Dag Hammarskjold's action in sending U.N. peacekeeping troops to the Congo, then a key Soviet client state. "The general assembly of 1960 was the greatest circus in the history of the United Nations," recalls Mr Brian Urquhart, who then was under secretary-general in charge of peacekeeping operations. Sometimes crude, profane and easily angered, Khrushchev created the most memorable scene in the history of the U.N. debate when he interrupted a delegate's remarks by pounding a shoe on the Soviet delegation's desk for a point of order. "Khrushchev got so abusive that the Irish president of the assembly, Mr Freddie Boland, broke the gavel in calling him to order," said Mr Urquhart. Mr Gorbachev is likely to provide no melodramatic fireworks. Unlike Khrushchev, Mr Gorbachev has rejected the idea that capitalism and socialism are mutually exclusive. This stress on cooperation in areas of mutual interest has been spilling over for some time into the UN.

The Soviet Union has in recent years relinquished its practice of vetoing many security council actions, and has negotiated consensus positions with the US, China, Britain and France. This new spirit of cooperation has led to the political settlement in Afghanistan and the cease-fire in the Iran-Iraq war, both of which would have been unlikely under the confrontative Soviet style of Khrushchev or

Mr Leonid I. Brezhnev. Under Mr Gorbachev, the Soviets have been promoting an aggressive though hazy new plan for comprehensive international security, in which the UN would play a key role in monitoring, verification and peacekeeping. Mr Gorbachev has also suggested that rulings of the world court, now merely advisory, be made binding on U.N. member-nations, especially security council members. In his speech to the world body, Mr Gorbachev may expand upon previous Soviet proposals, which have included the establishment of a world space organisation, halving all nations' earmarked troops for a standing army of U.N. peacekeepers, establishing a U.N. navy to escort commercial shipping in danger zones, and U.N. monitoring of disarmament and international arms sales. The US and other Western allies have lauded parts of the Soviet security proposals, but feel the whole package is too vague to endorse. A U.N. visit by a Soviet leader is a rarity — the foreign minister usually delivers the annual address to the general assembly. Between Khrushchev and Mr Gorbachev, the only other top-ranking Soviet visitor was then premier Alexei N. Kosygin, the head of the Soviet government apparatus but less powerful than party chief Brezhnev, who came to the UN in 1967 to support Arab complaints against Israel. Mr Kosygin held a summit with the U.S. president, Mr Lyndon B. Johnson.

The thaw in East-West relations since Mr Gorbachev's ascension to power is all the more striking when compared

with the tensions that prevailed at the UN only five years ago after the Soviet downing of Korean airliner flight 007, with the loss of 269 lives. The “Soviet foreign minister, Mr Andrei Gromyko, planned to come to the UN to explain his country’s actions, but the governors of New York and New Jersey denied permission for his plane to land at their commercial airports, and the state department insisted on a landing at a military base. Mr Gromyko cancelled his visit. In the meantime, homeless activists angered by Gorbachev’s plans to visit New York city’s opulent Trump Tower are inviting the Soviet president to a homeless shelter and food line to get “a more balanced and realistic view of our nation.” (*The Times of India*, December 7, 1988).

A COMPARISON

Lord Macaulay (T. B. Macaulay, 1800-1859) came to India in 1834. As a senior member of the Supreme Council of India, he introduced an education system that eventually spread throughout the country as the “English Education System.” In Macaulay’s own words, the aim of this system was to create a generation that would be Indian by birth but English in thought:

“So that a generation may arise which will be
Indian in birth and English in thought.”

Almost all Muslim leaders, young and old alike (with

the single exception of Sir Syed), opposed this system of education. They began giving speeches against it. Some called it a “slaughterhouse.” Others attached mocking verses to it, such as:

“Pharaoh was never disgraced by killing children,
Alas, he never thought of building colleges.”

Most Muslims did not take part in this system of education. Those who enrolled often left midway. The result of this opposition was that Muslims fell at least two hundred years behind other communities in education. Today, the root of nearly all the problems Muslims face lies in this backwardness. Lack of education leaves people unaware, and a community without awareness can expect nothing but ruin in this world.

Now consider another example. After the Second World War in 1945, Japan was defeated. America then took complete control of Japan—politically, militarily, and administratively. After this defeat, Japan found itself entirely under American authority. The U.S. forcibly disarmed Japan and brought sweeping changes to its education system. In December 1945, Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964) issued key directives about education, with the specific aim of eliminating militarism and weakening the nationalist spirit of the Japanese people.

Many wartime teachers were removed from service. Religion and politics were completely separated. Shinto

teachings were taken out of the curriculum. The purpose of these changes was to shape Japan's younger generation according to America's wishes. In 1946, a team of American education experts arrived in Japan with a detailed plan. They produced a report titled:

Report of the United States Education Mission
to Japan.

This report was essentially a practical explanation of the directives General MacArthur had issued to Japan's Ministry of Education in his capacity as the country's supreme authority. In 1947, Japan's Basic Education Law and School Education Law were drafted in line with this report. In 1948, Japan's Education Board was created to ensure that the education system continued to run according to America's preferences. Thus, schools, colleges, and universities in Japan adopted an education system modeled entirely on the one in America.

Unlike India's Muslim leaders, the Japanese did not label America's plan as "educational colonialism," nor did they launch protests or boycotts against it. Without losing a single day, they placed their entire younger generation into this "American education system."

Now, nearly half a century has passed since then. The outcome is plain for all to see. Those who studied under this system emerged as true "Japanese." They did not become "Americans" in any sense, as America had intended. On the

contrary, against all American expectations, they brought about a new revolution in Japan. They created a new history for their nation. They unleashed a wave of progress so strong that even America could not hold it back. They placed Japan among the leading nations of the world.

This is the secret of progress in the modern world. Success belongs to those who can turn unfavourable conditions into favourable ones, who can transform hostile plans into an advantage, who can turn a “no” into a “yes.” Only people with this ability succeed in today’s competitive world. Those who fail in this test have no fate other than to be consigned to irrelevance, protesting against others—protests that no one is even there to hear.

In this regard, just as the secular section of our country has failed, the Islamist section has also fallen short. For instance, Akbar Allahabadi (1846–1921), a renowned Urdu poet and satirist of British India, and Abul Ala Maududi (1903–1979), a prominent Muslim theologian and founder of Jamaat-e-Islami, viewed the educational institutions of the British era as slaughterhouses and sought to keep an entire generation away from them.

This was an utterly meaningless and foolish stance. What these religious leaders should have done was to create awareness among Muslim youth so that they would take knowledge from English institutions while setting aside their cultural influence. However, owing to a limited

perspective, they adopted a negative approach. As a result, an entire generation of Muslims was left educationally deprived. In this respect, the people of Japan proved wiser than the Muslims of India.

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

In the 1986–87 Civil Service examinations, around 194,000 candidates from across the country appeared in the preliminary test. Out of these, only ten thousand qualified for the main examination. After this stage, 1,700 candidates were selected for interviews. Finally, 855 candidates were declared successful for the highest national services.

The final result was published in newspapers on 8 June 1987, along with the list of successful candidates. People noticed that after such a long process of testing and selection, the very first name on the list of those chosen for the civil services was “Aamir Subhani (b. 1964)”. He had secured the top rank in this prestigious national examination. This single incident is enough to prove that Muslims in this country have open opportunities for the highest levels of success. No prejudice or bias blocks their path to progress.

Muslims make up about 12 percent of India’s total population. By this ratio, at least one hundred Muslims

should have appeared in the list of 855 successful candidates. But in reality, only eleven Muslims were included. Many Muslims generally believe this is due to prejudice. But if we look closely at how the civil service examinations are conducted, this claim appears to be without basis.

In the written civil service examinations, candidates' names are not written on the answer sheets—only code numbers are used. In such a system, it is impossible for an examiner to know a candidate's community. The second stage is the interview, which is conducted by a board of five to seven members. Each member is an expert in his field. If the members were truly biased and narrow-minded, no Muslim would ever be selected for the IAS, let alone secure the top rank. Even if we assume some degree of prejudice, it still cannot be decisive.

The reason lies in the structure of the exams. The written papers carry a total of 1,800 marks, while the interview carries only 250. So even if a candidate were treated unfairly in the interview, this alone would not disqualify him—provided he had scored well in the written exams. This is because the final list of successful candidates is prepared by combining marks from both the written and the interview stages. Decisions are never based solely on interview scores.

An instructive example is that Mr. Aamir Subhani scored 64 percent overall in the written exams, while in the interview he secured 74 percent—10 percent higher.

When asked how he had prepared for the civil services, he explained that for six months he studied 12 to 14 hours daily. Even before that, he had the habit of studying late into the night. Alongside his textbooks, he regularly read *Indian and Foreign Review*—a government magazine on India's policies and international affairs, *Yojana*—a government journal on development and public policy—and *India Today*, a weekly Indian English news magazine. He also made it a point to read several English newspapers from Delhi thoroughly every day.

The truth is that Mr. Amir Subhani's remarkable success is the result of exceptional hard work. Owing to his dedication, he consistently passed every examination from matriculation to M.A. with distinction. When asked what advice he would give, based on his experience, to young people preparing for the IAS examination, he replied, work and total dedication to your goal.

(This report was published not only in the English newspapers of June 8, 1987, but also in *Nai Dunya* on June 30, 1987, and in *Blitz* on August 15, 1987)

In India, Muslims have two fields of action. One is the field of demands and protests. The other is the field of hard work and effort. Our leaders have been symbols of the first. People like Aamir Subhani are symbols of the second. For the past half-century, our leaders have walked the path of confrontation. By blaming others, they have carried on endless campaigns of protest. On the other

hand, individuals like Aamir Subhani turned their attention away from others, relied on their own efforts, and focused on developing their personal abilities.

If we look at practical results, the leaders' approach has proved entirely fruitless for the Muslim community. Not even one percent of positive benefit has come from this path. In contrast, those who followed the path of Aamir Subhani have always succeeded. Their efforts have always brought positive results.

These two examples make it clear what Muslims in this country should do. They must completely give up the path shown by their leaders and fully adopt the path of "Aamir Subhani." This is the only way by which Muslims can reach success.

PATIENCE WINS HEARTS

Maulana Ikramuddin Qasmi (born in 1938) was from Dumrawan in the Bhagalpur district of Bihar. In a meeting on 7 February 1990, he shared some personal experiences that carry an important lesson.

One such incident took place in 1966. Maulana Ikramuddin crossed the Ganga River by steamer. From there, he boarded a passenger train at Barari railway station, heading to Bhagalpur. The train was crowded. On one seat, there was an old Dalda tin being used to carry Ganga water. He moved the tin aside and sat down.

After some time, a Hindu youth returned. The tin was his. He had placed it on the seat and stepped out. When he noticed it had been moved, he asked who had done it. Maulana Ikramuddin replied, "I moved it." At once, the young man grew furious. In his belief, since a Muslim had touched it, the tin had become impure. He shouted, "This tin contained Ganga water. I was taking it to Deoghar. You have defiled it. Now it is useless." His anger boiled over, and he kept shouting that the water had been made impure. Maulana Ikramuddin did not react. Calmly, he stood up, leaving the seat for the youth. He said, "I did not know this tin contained Ganga water, or that touching it would make it impure. I made a mistake. Please forgive me."

But the young man continued to rage, while Maulana listened silently without showing any reaction. Watching this, the other Hindu passengers turned against the youth and came to Maulana's support. They said, "Since he is quiet and has admitted his mistake, why are you shouting so much?" They reassured Maulana: "Don't worry. He cannot do anything to you."

Eventually, the youth fell silent. Maulana kept standing. After a while, the youth asked coldly, "Where are you coming from?" Maulana replied, "From Khadak Bazar" (where he lived at the time). The youth said, "There is a Maulana Ikramuddin in Khadak Bazar. Do you know him? He is a very good man. My mother once went to him for an amulet, and it helped her a lot. I want to meet him."

Smiling, Maulana said, “He is traveling right now. By tomorrow he will return. Then you can meet him.” The youth asked, “How do you know he is traveling?” Maulana replied, “The traveler you are speaking to is that very Maulana Ikramuddin.”

As soon as he heard this, the young man fell at his feet. He said, “Forgive me. I have made a terrible mistake. I feel like punishing myself for it.” He insisted that Maulana sit in his place, while he himself stood until the last station. At the next stop, when they both got off, the youth pressed Maulana to have breakfast with him. Maulana narrated more such incidents and remarked, “Among Hindus we have found good character. Such character we do not find among present-day Muslims.”

He shared another story as well: In 1982, I went to Bangalore to lead the Tarawih prayers. One day, I was traveling by scooter from Hegnur to Koram Halli. On the way, my scooter ran out of petrol. I pushed it for some distance until I saw a coconut grove by the roadside, with a car parked inside. I went in. A Hindu man was sitting there. As soon as he saw me, he told his worker, “Bring a chair.” They seated me and asked what the matter was. I explained, “My scooter has run out of petrol. The nearest petrol is eight kilometers away. Seeing your car, I thought I might get some petrol here.”

The Hindu immediately told his driver, “Check if there’s

petrol outside. If yes, put it in his scooter. If not, take some out of our car and give it to him.” After receiving petrol, I pulled out a twenty-rupee note to pay. At once, the Hindu folded his hands and said, “Please, don’t embarrass us. We don’t want money—just your prayers.”

Do not get angry with people. And if someone gets angry with you, do not respond with anger—calm them down instead. You will see that the person you thought was your enemy will turn into a close friend.

Every human being is created by God. No one in this world is created by anyone else. This means every person has the same nature as everyone else. Each person has the same awareness of good and bad.

But every person also carries an ego. This “ego” is the root of all problems. Yet God, in His special mercy, has kept this ego dormant within the human heart. By default, it lies asleep. True wisdom is to let it remain asleep, never waking it.

When a person’s ego is asleep, he acts naturally. At that time, he does only what true humanity demands. A person becomes bad only when his ego is stirred. A wise person should avoid awakening others’ egos as much as possible. And if someone’s ego does get aroused, he should act wisely to put out that fire at once.

Those who adopt this wise way will never have grievances against others—no matter what country they live in.

THE POWER OF CONSTRUCTIVE WORK

In May 1990, gunfire erupted on a street in Karachi. Shots were being fired from both sides. People were being wounded, and bodies lay on the ground. Muhajirs and Sindhis were exchanging fire with Kalashnikov rifles. Even the police, terrified, had withdrawn.

Suddenly, the sound of a siren broke through the chaos. An ambulance sped onto the street. As soon as it appeared, both sides stopped shooting. The ambulance pulled up, and its staff lifted the dead and injured into the vehicle. During this entire process, the fighting paused. But once the ambulance drove away, the same people resumed firing as though they were sworn enemies.

This was the work of Abdul Sattar Edhi (1928-2016) of Karachi. Through 30 years of selfless service, he had earned such respect that wherever he went, even rioters and terrorists bowed before him.

Edhi's formal education ended after the sixth grade. In 1947, he migrated from Junagadh to Pakistan, where he took up small jobs to make a living. Soon, he noticed how weak the ambulance system was in Pakistan. His spirit of service grew stronger. With loans and donations, he bought an old truck, covered it with cloth, and began using it as an ambulance.

He dedicated himself to taking the injured and sick to hospitals and carrying unclaimed bodies to cemeteries. Seeing his sincerity and hard work, people began to support him. He bought more ambulances. Today, his fleet includes 350 vehicles, all equipped with sirens, radios, and oxygen cylinders. He also purchased two helicopters to reach those in distant areas.

Along with this, he set up hospitals, maternity homes, orphanages, and other welfare centers. Recently, he acquired 11 acres of land to bring all his services together in one place. The site will also have a field for landing and housing helicopters.

Thirty years earlier, Edhi had been so poor that when his mother fell ill, he had neither the money for medicine nor the means to take her to a hospital. She died in great pain. But her death gave him new purpose. The shock made him realize how many poor people must suffer in the same way, with no one to help them.

He resolved to create a welfare organization to serve those in need. Thirty years ago, he began this institution in the simplest of circumstances. Today, it has grown so much that its annual budget is 120 million rupees. The man who once could not afford medicine for his dying mother now provides food and clothing for 7,500 people at his center.

Abdul Sattar Edhi received the international Magsaysay Award. In June 1989, the widely read American magazine *Reader's Digest* published a feature praising him, summarized

in the February 1990 issue of *Al-Risala*. On 30 June 1990, New Delhi's *India Today* published a seven-page illustrated report with the headline:

Pakistan's Father Teresa.

Constructive work has an irresistible appeal. If you truly set an example of constructive action, people will be compelled to acknowledge it—even your fiercest opponents.

For Edhi, one possible path was the example set by shallow leaders in both India and Pakistan: politics of slogans and banners against the “system.” He could have started a third-rate newspaper, publishing sensational headlines about people's suffering. He could have launched campaigns demanding action from government institutions. He could have gathered angry young crowds who, in the name of protest, burned buses and set hospitals on fire.

Another path was the one followed by so-called Islamic activists. They marched in the streets shouting slogans like “Establish the Islamic system,” creating the same atmosphere of hatred and conflict between the people and the government that today's Islamists have irresponsibly spread everywhere.

Had Edhi chosen such methods, he would only have increased his country's problems in the name of solving them. Instead, he decided to take direct responsibility. No matter how small his work seemed, he chose to begin action himself.

The result of this decision was that, forty years later, he built a constructive legacy in Pakistan—recognized from India to America. In the same period, other leaders of his country created nothing but destruction.

THE SECRET OF LIFE

The Japanese consider themselves descendants of the Sun. They believe their race is superior to others and that they have the right to dominate other nations. This thinking gave rise to the slogan:

East Asia for Japan.

This mindset, rooted in Japan's history, made the nation aggressive. From 1937 to 1945, they fought other nations to defend this self-proclaimed right. At first, Japan achieved victories. In 1942, for example, they captured Manila, and soon after, Singapore, Dutch East Indies, and Rangoon also fell under their control. But eventually, they suffered a crushing defeat. In trying to gain more, they lost even what they had.

During the Second World War, America and Japan became enemies. Japan had only simple bombs, while America developed nuclear weapons. This broke the balance of power. In July 1945, America dropped two atomic bombs on Japan. Japan's military strength was shattered. America won, and Japan had no choice but to accept what one

observer called a humiliating surrender (*Time*, April 13, 1987, p. 15).

At that moment, Japan chose realism. On August 14, 1945, Emperor Hirohito, the ruler of Japan at the time, delivered a radio broadcast to the nation. He said:

We must bear the unbearable and endure the unendurable in order to pave the way for peace for all future generations. (*The New York Times*, August 15, 1945)

In line with this decision, Japan signed the surrender documents on September 2, 1945, accepting America's dominance.

For Japan, this was no ordinary decision. Until then, the nation had been driven by a sense of superiority. Now it had to stand on the ground of realism. Until then, it had lived with anti-foreign emotions; now it had to turn inward, practicing self-reflection to discover the secret of life. Japan's condition at the time was grim. Its industries lay in ruins. The "war criminal" General MacArthur was imposed on the country. Besides losing Korea, Burma, Singapore, Taiwan, and other occupied territories, Japan also lost parts of its own land, such as Karafuto Island and Okinawa. In 1946, the "MacArthur Constitution" was enforced, designed to keep a defeated nation completely under foreign control.

All this was truly "enduring the unendurable." Many

Japanese could not bear it and took their own lives in grief. According to *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1984), military extremists even tried to prevent the Emperor's message from being broadcast. When they failed, many nationalists and army officers, overwhelmed by humiliation, committed suicide:

“There were a number of suicides among the military officers and nationalists who felt themselves dishonoured” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 10, p. 86).

By choosing realism, Japan accepted the role of being number two. But this did not mean it agreed to remain second forever. It simply meant avoiding conflict with the stronger side in order to gain time for reconstruction. Under this policy, Japan accepted America's political and economic dominance and focused all its efforts on science and technology. This work continued, and within thirty years, history had changed. Militarily defeated Japan became an economic leader. Japan produced electronics and other goods of such high quality that even Americans began to prefer Japanese products over their own—because they were better in quality and cheaper in price. This deeply troubled American policymakers. One American politician, Pete Wilson, remarked:

The Japanese semiconductor Godzilla is now destroying everything but Tokyo.

After the war, Japan had become America's debtor. Now, America was sinking into debt to Japan. In 1986, American goods worth 26 billion dollars went to Japan, while Japanese goods worth 85 billion dollars went to America. The trade balance between the two countries collapsed. In 1986, Japan's trade surplus against America exceeded 85 billion dollars. Today, America is the world's largest debtor nation, while Japan is the world's largest creditor nation (*Time*, April 13 & 27, 1987).

This situation has inspired a flood of books. One American bestseller is titled *Japan Number One*. In 1945, Japan had accepted the position of number two against America. Forty years later, America itself had to admit that Japan had again become number one.

It was as though the Japanese had written a book called 'Japan Number Two' when they accepted the unbearable conditions imposed by the United States and recognized their secondary position. Only later could others write a book about them titled 'Japan Number One.' This reflects a law of today's world: those who accept defeat are the ones who ultimately triumph, and those who agree to step back are the ones who move forward again. Fourteen hundred years ago, Muslims discovered this profound truth through the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah. In modern times, the Japanese applied the same principle to their own circumstances.

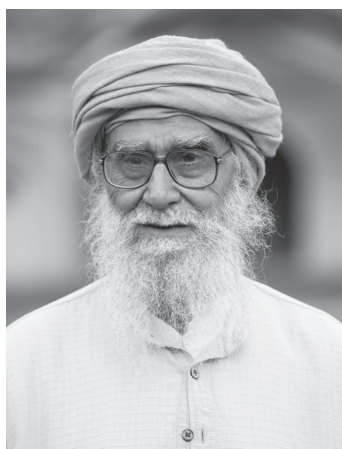
The truth is that this world is built on competition. Everyone is running, everyone wants to move ahead of

others. This competition is the ladder of human progress. All the advances of history have come out of this struggle. America's pursuit of leadership led to nuclear power, Japan's determination to rise again created the electronic age, and so on.

The result of such competition is that one nation repeatedly overtakes another, while some fall behind. In such times, if the weaker side wastes energy on complaint and protest, it will achieve nothing. Its only real path is to admit the fact that others have gone ahead and it has fallen behind.

This acknowledgment guides a person's efforts in the right direction. It allows them to rebuild without engaging in pointless conflict with those who have already advanced. Eventually, the day will come when they recover their lost position.

The awareness of being left behind gives a person the strength to move forward again. But if someone fails to engage in introspection over their backwardness, they will remain where they are, unable to move ahead.



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925–2021), an Islamic scholar, spiritual leader, and ambassador of peace, was internationally recognized for his seminal contributions to world peace. The Government of India posthumously honored him with the Padma Vibhushan in 2021 for his contributions to spirituality. Maulana authored over 200 books exploring Islam’s spiritual wisdom, the Prophet’s nonviolent approach, Islam’s relationship with modernity, and other contemporary issues. His English translation of the Quran and his commentary on the Quran are widely appreciated for their simplicity, clarity, and ease of understanding. In 2001, he founded the Centre for Peace and Spirituality International in New Delhi to promote a culture of peace and to share the spiritual message of Islam worldwide. Today, the CPS International network continues to carry this legacy forward.

www.quran.me www.goodwordquran.com
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The entire universe, excluding human beings, operates according to well-established laws of nature set by the Creator. Every element in the universe follows a fixed order and never deviates from it. By adhering to this order, each element in the universe reaches its stage of perfection.

In the same way, there is a natural law governing human life. Those who follow this law succeed in this world, while those who ignore it end up in failure. The present book explains these principles of nature from various perspectives, showing how human beings can lead successful lives by following them.

The basic principle of this law is that human life is structured around competition. Each individual must contend with others to secure their rightful share. This means that whenever a person or a nation achieves something in this world, it is owing to their own ability. If any group is left behind in the race of life, it should not complain about others but should instead look within to identify the cause of its failure. This compilation presents the same law of nature, explained from different perspectives.

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