

# ISSUES OF IJTIHAD

ISLAMIC WISDOM FOR CHANGING TIMES

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

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MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

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TAQLID  
AND  
IJTIHAD



## TAQLID AND IJTIHAD

The human mind can be categorized into two types: an imitative mind (*taqlid*) and a mind guided by independent reasoning (*ijtihad*). The distinction between these two can be described as follows: an imitative mind is a closed mind, while an independent reasoning mind is an open mind. The intellectual journey of an imitative person comes to a halt at a certain point, whereas the intellectual journey of an independent reasoning person continues to progress, ceasing only with death. This distinction can be better understood through an example.

Shakespeare was a great writer of the English language, who passed away in 1616. On the other hand, George Bernard Shaw, an English writer of a later period, was born in 1856—there was a gap of about three hundred years between their periods of activity. In the history of English literature, Bernard Shaw holds a lesser position as compared to Shakespeare. Referring to this, Bernard Shaw famously remarked:

“I am smaller in stature than Shakespeare, but I stand upon his shoulders.”

This statement reflects an independent reasoning approach. Such a way of thinking fosters broad-mindedness and courage. In a society where this attitude prevails, the journey of intellectual evolution continues unhindered. Each generation adds to the intellectual heritage of its predecessors and further develops it to pass on to future generations.

### **Contemporary Muslim Society**

Now, consider Muslim society. In the present era, the process of intellectual evolution among Muslims has almost come to a standstill. The primary reason for this stagnation is the dominance of imitative thinking (*taqlidi*), while the practice of independent reasoning (*ijtihadi*) has been abandoned, and treated almost as a vice to be avoided. Generally, there is a widespread belief that all knowledge and research have already been accomplished by the scholars of the past (*salaf*). The prevailing notion is that our only task is to read their books and follow their conclusions. However, this mindset creates a permanent obstacle to the intellectual progress.

Muslims today face two possible approaches in their way of thinking:

1. “My stature is lesser than that of my predecessors, but I stand upon their shoulders.”
2. “My stature is smaller than that of my predecessors, and therefore, I lie at their feet.”

The first approach represents the *ijtihadi* way of thinking, which leads to continuous intellectual progress. In a community where this intellectual tradition exists, each generation fully respects its predecessors but uses their achievements as a foundation to advance further. This ensures continuous growth and progress.

In contrast, the other school of thought is based on blind imitation, restricting the intellectual progress of Muslims at a certain point. This approach has two disadvantages simultaneously. First, it deprives such individuals of reaching the higher intellectual levels of religious truth. Second, it causes such individuals to fall behind other nations in intellectual and academic fields. In the continually-moving caravan of humanity, they remain behind as mere dust on the road.

This imitative mindset is precisely what the famous pre-Islamic poet Antarah bin Shaddad al-Absi (d. 615 AD) expressed in the opening lines of his *Mu'allaqa*:

*Hal ghaadara ash-shu'araau min mutaraddami*

“Have the poets left any patch unsewn?”

In other words, he believed that everything worth saying had already been said, leaving nothing new for others to contribute. This kind of thinking puts a complete stop to the intellectual progress, resulting in intellectual stagnation—a state more harmful and dangerous for an individual or community than anything else.

To further understand this issue, here are a few examples from the collection of Hadith.

## Respect for Humanity

An incident involving the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is narrated by various narrators in different collections of Hadith. In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, the incident is recorded as follows:

“In Madinah, a funeral procession passed by the Prophet Muhammad while he was sitting. Upon seeing the procession, he stood up out of respect for it, and his Companions stood up with him. It was mentioned to him that it was a Jewish funeral (not that of a Muslim). He responded, ‘Was he not a human being?’ (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1312)

Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari’s contribution is monumental, as he collected hundreds of thousands of Hadith and, through extraordinary effort, selected 7,563 Hadith (including repetitions) to compile the invaluable collection known as *Sahih al-Bukhari*. This work, regarded as the most authentic book after the Quran, stands as a singular achievement, unparalleled in its significance.

However, future generations must not confine themselves to Al-Bukhari’s arrangement and categorization. For instance, Al-Bukhari included the aforementioned Hadith in the chapter on funerals (*Kitab al-Jana’iz*), under the subheading “The one who stands for a Jewish funeral.” If later generations interpret the Hadith solely through the lens of this chapter title, they will perceive it merely as a

guideline for funeral practices, deriving only funeral-related lessons. Consequently, their intellectual engagement with this Hadith will remain limited to the topic of funerals.

Now, consider this matter in the context of the present time. One of the objections frequently raised against Islam is that its moral teachings emphasize respect for Muslims but lack respect for humanity as a whole. This objection is unquestionably incorrect and can be refuted with numerous references from the Quran and Hadith. In this regard, the incident involving the Prophet Muhammad given in the above Hadith serves as a compelling example. It demonstrates that Islam embodies perfect respect for humanity. Islamic teachings hold that every human being created by God deserves respect in all circumstances—whether they share the same religion or belong to another, whether they are from one nation or another, or even if they appear to be from an enemy nation. As human beings, they are entitled to respect.

However, when this Hadith is narrowly interpreted within the confines of funeral practices, an important principle of Islamic teaching—its universal respect for humanity—risks being overshadowed.

### **Consideration of Circumstances**

In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, it is narrated that the Prophet Muhammad told Aisha that when the Quraysh later rebuilt

the Kaaba, they did not construct it on the foundation laid by Prophet Abraham. Instead, they altered it (Prophet Abraham had built the Kaaba lengthwise, but the Quraysh made it square, leaving a portion of the original Kaaba outside, now known as Hateem). Aisha asked, “O Messenger of God, why don’t you rebuild the Kaaba on the foundation of Prophet Abraham?” The Prophet replied, “Your people (the Quraysh) have recently abandoned disbelief and entered Islam. I fear this may provoke them. If it were not for this fear, I would have done so.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1583)

Al-Bukhari included this Hadith in the Book of Hajj (Chapter on the Virtues of Makkah and its Construction). Suppose later generations restrict their understanding to the chapter title given by Al-Bukhari. In that case, they may only derive lessons regarding the virtues of Makkah from this Hadith and fail to uncover its broader relevance. However, this Hadith conveys a very significant lesson of Islam, which can be encapsulated as the “wisdom of life.” Rebuilding the Kaaba on the original foundation laid by Prophet Abraham would have been the correct course of action. However, leaving it on the foundation laid by the Quraysh during the pre-Islamic period of ignorance was apparently an improper act. Yet, the Prophet refrained from making this correction because, under the circumstances of the time, such a change could have led to more serious issues.

From this example of the Prophet, a vital principle can be derived: in life, there are situations where the consideration is not about what is right or wrong but about what is possible and what is impossible.

This principle is of immense importance. Achieving success in the present world often requires adherence to this pragmatic approach. Many of the failures of Muslims in the modern era stem from neglecting this principle. Instead of considering what is realistically achievable, they focus solely on what they perceive as right. They often rush to act on this perceived rightness, even when circumstances make its attainment impossible. The resulting fruitless sacrifices of Muslims in the present era are a direct consequence of ignoring this principle.

The root cause of this detrimental outcome is blind imitation (*taqlid*). By viewing the Hadith only through the lens of the chapter title provided by Al-Bukhari, they limited their understanding to the virtues of Makkah. They failed to extract the broader principle of the wisdom of life from it. This confinement to imitation prevented them from advancing to the subsequent stages of independent reasoning (*ijtihad*), which is essential for progress.

### **The Wisdom of Gradual Reform**

In a narration from *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Aisha, in response to a question, mentioned that the first revelations of the Quran

were the detailed chapters, which contained descriptions of Paradise and Hell. It was only after people's hearts had settled in Islam that verses concerning halal and haram (lawful and unlawful) were revealed. Aisha said, "Had the first thing to be revealed been: 'Do not drink wine,' they would have said, 'We will never give up wine.' And had it been revealed, 'Do not commit adultery,' they would have said, 'We will never give up adultery.'" (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 4993)

Al-Bukhari included this narration in his *Sahih* under the 'Book of the Virtues of the Quran' (Chapter on the Compilation of the Quran). If later generations study this narration solely under the chapter title given by Al-Bukhari, they will derive only issues related to the virtues or compilation of the Quran and nothing more. However, if one goes beyond the chapter title and reflects further, it becomes evident that this narration highlights a crucial aspect of Islam.

Pondering over this narration reveals that the application of Islamic guidance requires adherence to a significant principle: the wisdom of a gradual process. During the early period of Islam, Islamic teachings were applied with this wisdom of the gradual approach. The process involved first creating a willingness in people's hearts to follow divine guidance, and only after achieving this internal readiness were external laws introduced.



Considering the current Muslim leaders in this context, it becomes apparent that they have been reading the Hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari* only within the confines of its chapter title, without delving deeper. This imitative mindset has prevented them from grasping the important wisdom of gradual implementation highlighted in this Hadith.

For many years, loud calls for the application of *Shariah* law have echoed across various Muslim countries—such as Egypt, Pakistan, Iran, Sudan, Afghanistan, Algeria, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Bangladesh. However, despite countless sacrifices, *Shariah* law has not been successfully implemented in any Muslim country.

The reason for this failure lies in the weakened faith of contemporary Muslims, a condition resulting from prolonged complacency (referred to in chapter 57:16). This weakened faith has led to a lack of mental alignment and heartfelt readiness, both of which are essential for practically accepting *Shariah* laws. According to the aforementioned narration, their condition resembles that of the early Muslims who, if addressed with laws prohibiting wine and adultery prematurely, would have responded, “We will never give up wine” and “We will never give up adultery.”

In many Muslim countries, enthusiastic leaders have attempted to Islamize the media by taking over television systems and broadcasting “Islamic programs.” However, these efforts have largely proven ineffective. When these

Islamic programs were aired in Muslim households, family members often changed the channel, opting instead for other entertainment programs.

Despite vigorous efforts to enforce *Shariah*, these attempts failed primarily because contemporary Muslim leaders lacked the spirit of independent reasoning (*ijtihad*). They entered the political arena with an imitative mindset (*taqlid*), and the inevitable consequence of such an approach was exactly what unfolded in practice.

### **Change in the Field of Action**

In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, there is a narration from Abu Huraira in which the Prophet Muhammad said: “I have been commanded to migrate to a town which will swallow other towns. They call it Yathrib, but it is Madinah.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1871)

Al-Bukhari included this Hadith in his *Sahih* under the chapter, ‘The Virtue of Al-Madinah.’ If later generations interpret this Hadith with an imitative mindset, they will derive only issues related to the virtues of Madinah. Consequently, most commentators on this Hadith have confined their discussions to this context. For example, many Hadith commentators argue that it is disliked (*makruh*) to call Madinah by its old name, Yathrib and that it should only be referred to as Madinah or Madinah Munawwarah. However, the Quran uses the term Yathrib for Madinah

(33:13), which contradicts this interpretation. To reconcile this, some scholars have explained, based on personal conjecture, that the Quran is merely quoting the words of non-Muslims. (Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bari*, Vol. 4, p. 105)

If we move beyond imitative thinking and approach this Hadith with independent reasoning, it becomes evident that the Prophet Muhammad was outlining an important principle of the Islamic method. This principle can be summarized as the “change of the field of action.” It highlights that when the situation in Makkah became difficult for Muslims, God commanded them to migrate to another city, Yathrib, where conditions were more favourable. Yathrib then became the centre of Islam and was called *Madinat al-Rasul* (the City of the Prophet) or *Madinat al-Islam* (the City of Islam).

In contemporary times, this principle is invaluable for achieving practical success. It can be referred to as migration (*hijrah*). It emphasizes that if favourable conditions are not found in one place, one should move to another. If an objective cannot be achieved through confrontation, it should be sought through reconciliation. If success is not attainable through violence, it should be pursued through peace.

Historical events reveal that many Muslim leaders in the present era, due to their imitative mindset, have failed to grasp this profound wisdom. As a result, they

have incurred enormous losses. For instance, violent movements in the name of Islam have caused tremendous loss of life and property. However, had these leaders embraced independent reasoning, they would have found guidance in the aforementioned Hadith. Consequently, they would have abandoned violent methods and adopted peaceful approaches, achieving success in accordance with the laws of nature.

This comparison underscores the difference between imitative thinking and independent reasoning. In essence, imitative thinking is akin to stopping at the first step, while independent reasoning involves climbing successive steps to reach the top. The first step, though initially important, serves as a foundation, for without it, subsequent steps cannot exist.

### **Stages of Hadith Study**

**The First Stage:** The foundational achievement of the early scholars of Hadith (*muhaddithin*) was their monumental effort in collecting and compiling Hadiths. This work represents the initial stage of Hadith study.

**The Second Stage:** The succeeding generation undertook the task of organizing these Hadiths into comprehensive indexes, facilitating easier access and the derivation of knowledge.

**The Third Stage:** This phase involved compiling the interpretations of Hadiths provided by the Companions, the Followers (*Tabi'in*), and the Followers of the Followers (*Taba' al-Tabi'in*). The objective was to understand the original context and background of these Hadiths.

**The Fourth Stage:** Scholars began analyzing Hadiths within the context of the historical circumstances of their times. This approach allowed for a broader and more nuanced understanding, as illustrated by the examples discussed earlier.

**The Fifth Stage:** A more recent and ambitious endeavour could involve the creation of a comprehensive Encyclopaedia of all authentic Hadiths. Such a resource would enable modern readers to engage with Hadiths in a style more aligned with contemporary methods of study. These stages of Hadith study are not definitive, but they serve to highlight the progression from an imitative approach (*taqlid*) to an approach based on independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) in Hadith scholarship. The emphasis lies on the benefits of adopting an analytical and contextual methodology for deriving deeper insights.

## **The Importance of Ijtihad**

*Ijtihad* is not merely an intellectual exercise; it is one of the most vital needs of the Muslim community. Through *ijtihad*, Muslims reaffirm their religious identity in every

era. By reapplying Islam to changing circumstances, they demonstrate that Islam is an eternal religion, as relevant in contemporary times as it was in ancient ones. In essence, *ijtihad* serves as a means to continually update Islamic thought, ensuring its relevance to the present day.

### What is Ijtihad?

Ijtihad does not mean forming opinions arbitrarily. Rather, it involves reflecting and pondering on the Quran and the Sunnah (the authentic sources of Islam) and deriving new *Shariah* rules through *qiyas* (analogy) or *istimbat* (deductive inference). In essence, *ijtihad* is also a type of *taqlid*. While an ordinary *muqallid* (one who engages in *taqlid*) follows the opinions of the *fuqaha* (Muslim jurists), the *mujtahid* (one who engages in *ijtihad*) follows the guidance of God and the Prophet by directly reflecting on the Quran and Hadith, deriving rules by inference.

The term *ijtihad* refers to the same intellectual process described as *istimbat* (inference) in the Quran (4:83). In the terminology of the *fuqaha*, this process is also known as *qiyas*.

The Quranic commentator Al-Qurtubi wrote: “*Istimbat* in the Arabic language means *istikhrāj*, and it indicates *ijtihad* when texts and consensus are absent” (*Al-Jami’ li Ahkam al-Quran*, Vol. 5, p. 292). This means that *istimbat* refers to deriving *Shariah* rulings through *ijtihad* in the absence of clear texts (*nass*) and consensus (*ijma*).

In the second century of the *Hijra*, Muslim jurists undertook this work of *ijtihad*. During the Abbasid Caliphate, many new issues arose that did not have direct or *mansus* (text-based) answers in the Quran and Sunnah. At that time, jurists solved these issues through *ijtihad*, deriving *Shariah* rulings for new circumstances through *qiyas* (analogy) or *istimbat* from the texts of the Quran and Sunnah. This effort ensured that the Muslim community continued to receive *Shariah* guidance for evolving circumstances, allowing their historical journey to proceed without interruption.

However, after the second and third centuries of the *Hijra*, a misconception arose among Muslims for various reasons. This misconception was that the *ijtihad* or *istimbat* required to be done directly from the Quran and Sunnah had been fully accomplished by the early jurists. It was believed that there was no longer a need to derive rulings directly from the primary sources of Islam. Instead, the task for later Muslims was to study the works of these early jurists, contemplate them, and derive *Shariah* rulings for later times.

As a result, in the intellectual history of Islam, the jurists of the Abbasid period were given the status of absolute mujtahids, while the jurists of the later period were considered restricted mujtahids. The *ijtihad* of the early jurists was based on the Quran and Sunnah, whereas for later scholars, *ijtihad* meant staying within the confines of the early jurists' interpretations to derive rulings.

## Intellectual Crisis

This marks the onset of the intellectual crisis among Muslims. This stagnation in thought has rendered the Muslim community a stationary caravan. Amir Shakib Arslan (d. 1946) addressed this issue in his book ‘Why Muslims Lagged Behind and Others Progressed’ (Arabic: *Limaza Ta’akhhkharal Muslimoon wa Limaza Taqaddama Ghairuhum?*). He argued that the primary reason for the backwardness of Muslims in the modern era is the cessation of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning).

*Ijtihad* is not an optional endeavour; it is an essential and inevitable process. The question is not whether *ijtihad* should be undertaken—it is a natural necessity. Halting this process is akin to disrupting the flow of nature itself, and such disruption inevitably leads to stagnation and the cessation of progress.

The vitality of a river lies in its flow. If the flowing waters of a river are obstructed, it ceases to be a river and becomes a stagnant, foul-smelling pond. In the same way, if a community suspends the process of *ijtihad*, stagnation will ensue, making all forms of progress—material, religious, and spiritual—impossible.

## The Ability to Reassess

A person with an imitative mindset, as the popular saying goes, simply follows the beaten path. Such individuals lack the ability to reassess situations. They persist in following the same familiar track, even when it yields no results. In



contrast, a person with a mindset of independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) continuously reevaluates circumstances. They study the past and present to develop new plans of action. While the imitative person remains stuck in the past, the person with independent insight looks toward the future.

An example of this distinction can be found in the history of the Indian subcontinent. During the 18th and 19th centuries, when the British dominated India, Muslim leaders of that era largely responded with armed confrontation. Influenced by the traditional theories of *Dar al-Harb* (land of war) and *jihad*, their mindset led them to pursue only one course of action: to fight the British and eliminate these foreign rulers.

Under this approach, Sultan Tipu waged war against the British in 1799, which resulted in his death and the collapse of his vast kingdom. Similarly, in 1857, Muslim leaders launched an armed rebellion against the British, which continued in various forms for over half a century. This rebellion also ended in their complete destruction, bringing no benefit to Islam or Muslims.

This exemplifies an imitative response to the challenges posed by British rule. However, history also provides an example of an approach based on independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) in response to the same issue. This approach was embodied by Syed Muhammad Rashid Rida (d. 1935). In 1912 (1330 AH), he visited Lucknow at the invitation of Maulana Shibli Nomani to attend a session of the Darul

Uloom Nadwatul Ulama. He then visited Darul Uloom Deoband, which was at that time a centre of resistance against the British. During his visit, a special session was convened at Darul Uloom Deoband. Maulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri (1875-1933) delivered a speech on behalf of the institution. Following this, Syed Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935) addressed the gathering. His speech, delivered in Arabic, was later published in the proceedings of Darul Uloom Deoband (1330 AH). An excerpt from his speech reads:

“There is an important point that every farsighted Muslim should consider: the number of Muslims in India is so small compared to non-Muslims that their existence in this country will always be in danger. The British government, which is a government of reason and justice, has maintained a balance between non-Muslims and Muslims. If this balance is disrupted at any time, you can imagine what the result would be. Probably, Muslims will face the same fate as they did in Andalusia. Therefore, we must have a group among us to dispel the doubts cast on Islam. These doubts have arisen due to the modern sciences and arts, and it is essential to remove them. However, dispelling these doubts is impossible without understanding modern philosophy. Therefore, it is necessary that the members of this group be familiar with

the key issues of modern philosophy.” (*Al-Jami’at Weekly*, Delhi, February 2, 1970, p. 10)

This speech by Syed Muhammad Rashid Rida reflects the spirit of independent reasoning (*ijtihad*). By thoroughly analyzing the situation, he foresaw that the balance between the Muslim minority and the non-Muslim majority in undivided India, maintained by the presence of the British as a third power, would collapse once the British withdrew. The resulting political independence would bring new challenges for Muslims rather than solve their problems.

Based on this forward-looking assessment, Syed Rashid Rida advised Muslim leaders in India to focus on dawah (peacefully conveying the teachings of Islam) rather than armed confrontation. He urged them to prepare intellectually rather than militarily, ensuring they could effectively convey Islam’s peaceful message in line with the demands of the time. However, the Muslim leaders of that era were so consumed by their animosity toward the British that they could not imagine any constructive work being undertaken under British rule. A significant historical opportunity was lost, and the primary reason was the absence of the spirit of independent reasoning (*ijtihad*).

Muslims suffered setbacks because they adopted an imitative mindset and stopped practicing *ijtihad*. This stagnation has left Muslims akin to a backward caravan in the modern era, struggling to keep pace with contemporary challenges.

## Compilation of Fiqh During the Era of Muslim Power

The root of this tragedy lies in the fact that the foundational corpus of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) was compiled many centuries ago during the Abbasid Caliphate. This era marked the zenith of Muslim global dominance, with the Muslim world recognized as the most formidable political power of its time. A poet aptly captured this reality with the following verse:

“From East to West, we were dominant across the world,

No nation’s scale was weightier than ours in the world.”

The *fiqh* that exists today was compiled during this era of dominance. As a natural consequence, the spirit of that time became embedded in it. This compiled *fiqh* thus became a form of authoritative jurisprudence.

## No Example Available

I once heard a lecture by a well-known Islamic scholar and thinker, delivered in a city in India. The topic of his speech was “Islam in the Modern Era.” At the end of the lecture, someone from the audience asked the speaker what guidance the *Shariah* provides for us in a country like India. Upon hearing this question, the Muslim scholar remained silent for a while and then said that answering

this question is very difficult. This is because the model of a position of strength exists in Islamic *Shariah*, but the model of a position of modesty does not.

For a long time, I wondered why this scholar-leader could not find a model for a position of modesty in Islamic *Shariah*. Finally, I understood that this scholar (like other contemporary Muslim leaders) knew only the codified jurisprudence (*fiqh*) as Islamic *Shariah*, i.e., the *fiqh* that was developed when Muslims were in a position of power and authority in all respects. Consequently, the Islamic jurisprudence that was developed during that time, consciously or unconsciously, became the jurisprudence of the powerful. It represented the state of power and authority. This is why, in the present era, when Muslim leaders saw that they had been deprived of absolute authority, they felt that their *Shariah* did not provide them with any positive guidance for their position of modesty. As a result, in the current era, they saw no other option but to start a fight with others to regain power.

Undoubtedly, the jurisprudence developed during the era of power did not contain this guidance, but the Quran, which was revealed during the early period, undoubtedly contained eternal teachings. It provided guidance for every situation, even for the state that the said Muslim leader described as a position of modesty. This is because God knew in advance that Muslims would not always remain in the same condition. They would face different situations at

different times. As the Quran states: “If you have suffered a wound, they too have suffered a similar wound. We bring these days to men by turns, so that God may know those who believe, and choose witnesses from among you; and God does not love the unjust.” (3:140)

The Prophet Muhammad experienced both states. His Makkan period was, as it were, a period of modesty for him, and his Madinan period was a period of power. Both these states are equally desirable, and there are equal models for both states in the life of the Prophet. Neither model is inferior, nor is any model superior. In the eyes of God, all decisions are based on the person’s inner intentions, not on external political or non-political conditions.

### **The Issue of Blasphemy Against the Prophet**

To understand this matter, consider the following: all jurists agree that anyone who insults the Prophet Muhammad, even indirectly, is subject to a mandatory death penalty. Blasphemy is considered a prescribed punishment (*hadd*). This ruling has little exception among notable jurists. For detailed discussions, refer to the following works:

1. *Al-Sarim al-Maslul ‘ala Shatim al-Rasul* by Ibn Taymiyyah
2. *Al-Sayf al-Maslul ‘ala Man Sabb al-Rasul* by Taqi al-Din Ali al-Subki
3. *Tanbih al-Wulat wa al-Hukkam ‘ala Ahkam Shatim Khayr al-Anam aw Ahad Ashabihi al-Kiram* by Ibn Abidin al-Shami

Writers often cite these jurists to argue that the punishment for blasphemy in Islam is death, claiming a near-unanimous consensus with minimal juristic disagreement.

However, a critical question arises: If this ruling is mandated by *Shariah*, why was it not enforced during the early days of Islam? Historical records show that many individuals committed blasphemy against the Prophet but were not executed.

One clear example is Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul of Madinah. He openly blasphemed against the Prophet repeatedly. Despite irrefutable evidence and public pressure, the Prophet did not order his execution, and Abdullah ibn Ubayy eventually died a natural death. Explaining this incident, Allama Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 AH) writes:

“The Prophet refrained from killing him only because it was feared that his execution would cause people to turn away from Islam since Islam was weak at that time.” (*Al-Sarim al-Maslul ‘ala Shatim al-Rasul*, p. 179)

This prompts another question: Why does the jurisprudence of the early Islamic period differ from the fiqh developed later under the Abbasid Caliphate?

In February 1989, Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa declaring that Salman Rushdie had insulted the Prophet Muhammad in his book ‘The Satanic Verses’ and that it

was obligatory for Muslims to kill him. This fatwa received widespread support from Muslims worldwide, with the exception of this writer. Massive demonstrations followed, but despite global Muslim support, the fatwa could not be carried out. Instead, the issuance of the fatwa and subsequent reactions led to Islam being defamed globally, with its image, God forbid, associated with barbarity.

In today's world, freedom of expression is considered a fundamental human right, akin to a modern "religion." Consequently, the global community perceived this fatwa as a direct attack on their values. Modern media amplified the issue, ensuring it reached every corner of the world. Thus, the same concern that led the Prophet Muhammad to refrain from executing Abdullah ibn Ubayy manifested on a much larger scale in the case of Salman Rushdie.

Now, consider these two opposing precedents. The precedent set by the Prophet of Islam demonstrates that in the case of *Shatm-e-Rasool* (blasphemy against the Messenger), no matter how widespread it may be, the practical consequences of executing the blasphemer must be taken into account. In contrast, the precedent set by the jurists (*fuqaha*) dictates that whenever someone commits *shatm* (blasphemy), they must be immediately put to death.

Why did they do so? The answer lies in imitation (*taqlid*). Contemporary Muslims adopted the view that the door to independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) from the Quran and



Sunnah was closed. Instead, they relied solely on juristic fatwas, adhering to them with imitative zeal. This mindset led to the rigid application of rulings derived during the Abbasid period, a time when Muslims held political dominance and could easily enforce such laws. An Arabic poet, Abu Firas al-Hamdani (932-968), aptly captured this era of authority:

“When the commanders dispatch an army against the enemies, we simply send a letter.”

However, circumstances have changed. Muslims today lack the same political and social dominance. Additionally, modern values, such as the sanctity of freedom of expression and the global influence of modern media, have created entirely new challenges.

The result was clear: despite widespread Muslim support, it was impossible to kill Salman Rushdie. Worse still, Islam’s reputation suffered irreparable damage. To modern observers, Islam came to be viewed as a religion of terrorism, fostering fanaticism. This was the outcome of attempting to enforce outdated jurisprudence in a completely changed era.

Had contemporary Muslims adopted *ijtihad-e-mutlaq* (absolute independent reasoning), they would have sought direct guidance from the *Quran* and *Sunnah* in Rushdie’s case. They would have realized that the solution lay not in issuing a fatwa for his execution but in refraining

from reactive measures and engaging in peaceful efforts to introduce Islam to the world. Instead, their imitative mindset trapped them within the confines of a jurisprudence developed during an era of Muslim dominance. As a result, they adhered to the juristic ruling that “The blasphemer is to be executed as a prescribed punishment” (*al-shatim yuqtal haddan*). *Ijtihad Mutlaq* can be translated as “absolute independent reasoning” in Islamic jurisprudence. It refers to the capacity of a scholar to exercise independent reasoning directly from the primary sources (*Quran* and *Hadith*) without relying on the interpretations of other scholars.

### **The Power of Peace**

Following the modern industrial revolution and the subsequent colonial era, Western nations rose to political and cultural dominance on a global scale. This presented a significant challenge for Muslims. Across the Muslim world, numerous leaders emerged, united in their belief that “*jihad* is the only solution” (*al-jihad huwa al-hall al-wahid*). However, despite nearly two centuries of extraordinary efforts and sacrifices, this approach of armed jihad failed to yield positive results for Muslims.

When analyzing this issue through the lens of the Quran and Hadith, it becomes clear that the true solution lies in the peaceful introduction of Islam. The Quran instructs the Prophet in such situations to convey the revealed teachings

under divine protection: “And God will protect you from the people” (5:67). Furthermore, the Quran emphasizes calling people to God with wisdom and good counsel, demonstrating that even adversaries can become allies through this approach: “Repel evil with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend.” (41:34)

It would not be incorrect to say that the Quran, in its silent language, was calling out: “The only solution lies in conveying God’s message to people.” Yet, why did it happen that present-day Muslims failed to find guidance in this clear message of the Quran? Instead of engaging in the peaceful communication of the divine message to people, they became involved in *jihad*—specifically in the sense of *qital* (armed combat). Given the prevailing circumstances, it was not difficult to foresee that such extremist actions would result in nothing but further devastation.

Why, then, did contemporary Muslim leaders make the grave error of adopting the un-Quranic notion that “*jihad* is the only solution”? The answer lies in their abandonment of *ijtihad-e-mutlaq* (that is, independent reasoning to derive rulings directly from the Quran and Sunnah. Instead, they adopted an imitative mindset, relying solely on the codified jurisprudence (*fiqh*) compiled centuries earlier.

At the time, the jurisprudential texts were filled with rulings on *jihad* in the sense of *qital* or combat. Every major book of *fiqh* contained extensive chapters on *jihad*,

but offered no comparable discussion on introducing Islam to the world. While the Quran explicitly calls for this work, these leaders had neglected the Quran as a direct source for deriving guidance and relied almost exclusively on *fiqh*. Unfortunately, the pages of *fiqh* offered little guidance on this concept.

This highlights the immense value of *ijtihad* and the detrimental consequences of relying solely on codified *fiqh* for deriving rulings.

A similar error was made by Muslim leaders of the Indian subcontinent after the rise of British dominance. They declared India as *Dar al-Harb* (the abode of war). In 1823, Shah Abdul Aziz Dehlvi (1746-1824) issued a fatwa declaring India *Dar al-Harb* (Fatawa Azizi [Persian], Delhi, 1322 AH, p. 17). Subsequently, 500 ulama signed a collective fatwa obligating *jihad* against the British. Indian Muslims, considering it their religious duty, waged armed *jihad* against British rule. Despite a century-long struggle, this *jihad* proved entirely fruitless.

Had these leaders moved beyond their reliance on *fiqh*, they would have recognized that contemporary India should have been seen as *Dar al-Dawah* (a field for peaceful outreach), much like certain regions during the early period of Islam. However, their rejection of *ijtihad* and exclusive reliance on codified *fiqh* left them confined to its limitations. Notably, existing *fiqh* texts contain rulings on *Dar al-Harb* (a territory of conflict), but lack any concept of *Dar al-Dawah* (a field for peaceful outreach).

## The Traditional Fiqh is Insufficient

The jurisprudence (*fiqh*) developed during the second and third centuries of the Islamic era came to be widely accepted among Muslims as a complete and comprehensive legal system. It was believed that all the teachings of the Quran and Hadith relevant to human life were fully detailed and perfectly encapsulated within it. This belief led to the notion that, after the compilation of this *fiqh*, the door to unrestricted *ijtihad* was effectively closed, leaving only limited forms of *ijtihad* available to Muslims.

This assumption appeared valid in earlier times, but as circumstances evolved—particularly with the end of the traditional era and the advent of the modern scientific age—it proved to be significantly detrimental. Muslims, adhering to the belief that the existing corpus of *fiqh* constituted a complete legal system, saw no reason to seek solutions beyond it. Consequently, they were deprived of many valuable insights present in the Quran and Sunnah that had not been incorporated into the compiled *fiqh*. This issue can be illustrated with a few examples.

In the modern era, the rise of democracy introduced a new political system. The existing *fiqh*, developed during an age of monarchy, contained no concept of modern democracy. As a result, those confined to the framework of traditional *fiqh* failed to grasp its significance. Some outrightly dismissed democracy as un-Islamic and declared it *haraam* (forbidden), while others trivialized it as mere

“head counting,” mocking it with statements like:

“Democracy is a form of government where;  
people are counted, not measured by their  
qualities.”

In reality, democracy represents a political blessing for Muslims. Unlike the monarchy of old, democracy is founded on the principle of power-sharing. It offers Muslims the opportunity to gain political influence in various countries through strategic participation. However, because they lacked the spirit of independent reasoning (*ijtihad*), Muslims failed to capitalize on this opportunity. Instead, an imitative mindset led to impractical ideas, such as establishing a caliphate in countries like the United States and even imagining converting California into “Khaleefornia.” This mindset blinded them to the more practical and achievable objective of securing political representation through the modern principle of power-sharing.

The root cause of this intellectual stagnation lies in Muslims’ rejection of direct guidance from the Quran and Hadith, a consequence of their imitative approach to *ijtihad*. Had this intellectual error not occurred, and had they approached the Quran with an open mind, they would have discovered clear guidance on such matters.

This guidance is evident in Chapter 12 of the Quran, which recounts the story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) (Joseph). During his time, Egypt was ruled by a polytheistic king

who, recognizing Joseph's exceptional capabilities, invited him to join his administration as a powerful partner. Joseph accepted the king's offer and took up an official position within his government. Formally, this was the office of minister for food and agriculture. In practice, however, it amounted to the position of deputy ruler, because in the ancient agrarian age, almost all economic and administrative activities of a country were based on agriculture. In this sense, the position given to Joseph was effectively the most strategic and influential office in the state.

If modern Muslims had moved beyond imitation (*taqlid*) of traditional *fiqh* and engaged with the Quran through independent reasoning (*ijtihad*), they would have recognized this incident as a profound prophetic example. It demonstrates how the principle of power-sharing can be effectively utilized, even within non-Islamic systems, and assures Muslims that such participation aligns fully with the prophetic tradition.

### **Utilization of Modern Opportunities**

Muslims in the present age suffer from a unique deprivation, one that perhaps no other nation or group shares to the same extent. This deprivation lies in their failure to capitalize on the vast opportunities afforded by the modern era.

One of the most significant opportunities available in contemporary times is what we now call "freedom." The

revolutionary French thinker Rousseau famously began his book ‘The Social Contract’ with the sentence: “Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains.” This phrase became the creed of the modern age, evolving into a universally accepted belief that freedom is a birthright of every human being. It is an inalienable right for individuals to act according to their convictions, with the sole condition being that this freedom must not involve aggression and must be exercised peacefully. Two illustrative stories shed light on this principle.

It is said that when America gained independence from British rule, an American citizen came out into the street to celebrate. He was walking along, swinging his arms vigorously. In the process, one of his hands struck the nose of a passerby. The passerby said angrily, “What is this nonsense?” The man replied, “America is free now. I can do whatever I like.”

The passerby answered calmly, “No doubt you are free, but your freedom ends where my nose begins.”

This anecdote eloquently encapsulates the modern concept of freedom: individuals are granted complete liberty, provided they do not resort to violence or infringe on the rights of others.

Similarly, Mahatma Gandhi, who learned this principle during his education in the West, applied it effectively in India’s struggle for independence. In 1857, Muslim leaders in India had launched a freedom movement against British



colonial rule, basing their efforts on violent struggle. Despite waging a bloody war for over sixty years, their movement failed. However, when Mahatma Gandhi assumed leadership of the independence movement in 1919, he adopted a fundamentally different approach, rooted in peaceful struggle. Consequently, India achieved independence in 1947.

What explains this stark difference? The failure of earlier efforts stemmed from the *taqlidi* (imitative) mindset of the Muslim leadership, which recognized only armed jihad as a strategy. The classical texts of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) were written in an era when the sword was the predominant symbol of power. These works reflect the worldview of their time, emphasizing violent struggle as the sole method of achieving goals. This is reflected in an old Arabic saying:

“War eliminates war” (*al-harb anfa lil-harb*).

A Persian poet similarly captured this ancient mindset:

“Whoever wields the sword,  
The coin bears his name.”

The military mindset is so deeply ingrained in contemporary Muslims that almost no Muslim remains unaffected by it. This mindset is perpetuated in various forms across different contexts. For example, a line from a Palestinian song states: “*Halumma noqatil, halumma noqatil, fa inna al-qitala sabeel al-rashad*” (Come, let us fight, come, let us fight, because fighting is the way to success).

This mental framework, rooted in ancient jurisprudence, became so prevalent that even modern thinkers could not escape its influence. Figures like Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897), Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), and Sayyid Abu al-A'la Maududi (1903-1979) were also caught in this mindset. This has been a key reason why the sacrifices of contemporary leaders have failed to yield significant results.

The example of Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) demonstrates how a peaceful approach can be more effective than armed struggle in the modern era. Gandhi joined the Indian freedom movement in 1919. Until then, the movement was based on the principle of violence, which the British government countered with their own violent measures. Gandhi abruptly announced that the movement would henceforth adopt the principle of non-violence instead of violence. This shift rendered the British government powerless, as they could no longer justify suppressing a non-violent movement.

It is said that when Gandhi made this announcement as the leader of the freedom movement, an English collector sent a telegram to his secretariat, stating:

“Kindly wire instructions on how to kill a tiger non-violently.”

This vividly illustrates how non-violence rendered the British government's violent suppression strategies ineffective.

Muslims, by adopting peaceful means, can achieve far more than they could through violent struggle. The failure to understand this reality lies in their continued adherence to an outdated mindset rooted in medieval jurisprudence, which recognizes only violent struggle as a valid means to achieve goals.

### **Anachronistic Attitude**

Contemporary Muslim leaders and intellectuals, constrained by an imitative mindset, have succumbed to an outdated mode of thinking. The figures they emulate from the past lacked the concept of peaceful methods or non-violent struggle. While these concepts are clearly outlined in the Quran and Sunnah, deriving rulings directly from these sources requires *ijtihad* (independent reasoning). Unfortunately, the door to *ijtihad* was long ago shut, to the extent that, as one scholar remarked, even the key to that door seems to have been lost.

The Quran articulates a timeless law of nature in these words: “Reconciliation is best” (4:128). This verse underscores the superiority of a conciliatory approach over a confrontational one, advocating non-violence in place of violence. Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad emphasized this principle in a hadith: “God is gentle and loves gentleness, and He grants to gentleness what He does not grant to harshness” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2593).

This highlights that a peaceful approach yields results far more effectively than a violent one.

Despite such clear guidance on peaceful methods in the Quran and Sunnah, modern Muslim leaders and intellectuals, due to their imitative mindset, have failed to recognize these teachings. Instead, they have persistently pursued violent approaches, mistakenly perceiving them as acts of sacrifice and martyrdom.

This adherence to an outdated mindset has caused immense setbacks for Muslims in the modern era while providing no tangible benefits. For example, had the Arabs of Palestine embraced this principle after 1948, they might have avoided a destructive armed struggle. By adopting peaceful methods and utilizing the opportunities available in the modern age, they could have achieved a position of influence in Palestine akin to the Jewish community's status in America—acquired through similar peaceful approaches.

Similarly, if the Muslims of Kashmir had understood this principle, they would not have resorted to the culture of guns and bombs that have come to define their struggle. Instead, they could have cultivated a culture of peace, harnessing modern opportunities within a framework of non-violence. This approach could have earned them a position of respect and influence not only in Kashmir but throughout India—a far more beneficial outcome than the so-called 'Azad Kashmir.'

Additionally, present-day Muslim leaders, who continue to engage in “power struggles” across various Muslim nations, are inadvertently contributing to the destruction of their own societies. If they had embraced peaceful methods, they could have transformed their nations into flourishing societies. This is evident in the achievements of secularists in countries like Singapore, where peace-based principles have led to remarkable progress.

### **Criticism and Ijtihad**

Critique and *taqlid* (blind imitation) are opposites. Where *taqlid* prevails, critique cannot thrive, and where genuine critique flourishes, *taqlid* disappears. In contrast, *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) inherently requires critique. Without an environment of critique, the process of *ijtihad* cannot continue.

However, critique must be genuine and constructive, not mere fault-finding. True critique involves scientific and logical analysis, whereas fault-finding is driven by the desire to highlight flaws and level accusations. When critique devolves into fault-finding, it ceases to be meaningful and becomes mere slander, devoid of intellectual value.

After the Crusades, certain Christian clergymen authored books criticizing Islam and Muslims, depicting Arabs as a barbaric nation. One of their claims was that Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph of Islam, ordered the burning

of the great library of Alexandria after the conquest of Egypt, leading to the destruction of its priceless collection of books.

A common response to this accusation has been to dismiss these individuals as enemies of Islam seeking revenge for their defeat in the Crusades. Such responses often allege that the story of the library's burning was fabricated as part of a conspiracy. However, this approach does not constitute constructive criticism. By its nature, it amounts to slander rather than a scholarly rebuttal of the clergymen's claims.

Later, some scholars approached the issue differently. Through rigorous historical investigation, they demonstrated that the claim was entirely baseless. They established that the library of Alexandria was not burned on the orders of Umar ibn al-Khattab. In fact, at the time of the Islamic conquest in 642 CE, the library no longer existed. Historical records show that the Roman ruler Julius Caesar had destroyed the library in 48 BCE, centuries before the Arab conquest. (For details, see Philip K. Hitti's *History of the Arab's*, page 166.)

This second method represents an example of scientific criticism. Criticism is not a vice; it is a vital tool for intellectual progress. Without a critical environment, the process of intellectual growth halts. The real choice before us is not between criticism and non-criticism but between

criticism and intellectual stagnation. Without critique, intellectual development ceases altogether.

The process of *ijtihad* occurs through open discussion. *Ijtihad* is essentially the pursuit of the unknown through the known. It begins with existing knowledge and seeks answers to emerging questions. In an open environment where ideas are freely expressed, a clash of perspectives occurs, revealing new dimensions of the matter. This free exchange of ideas leads to scrutiny and, ultimately, to the research-based conclusions that are the true goal of intellectual inquiry. This intellectual journey is what defines *ijtihad*.

Both in theory and practice, *ijtihad* is an essential aspect of life and guarantees the development of any social group. When the process of *ijtihad* ceases, progress within that group comes to a halt. However, for *ijtihad* to proceed effectively, criticism is indispensable. Only those who are willing to tolerate and embrace critique can fully benefit from *ijtihad*. Those who lack the temperament to listen to criticism and accept it with an open heart will never achieve the intellectual success that comes from forming an opinion based on independent reasoning (*ijtihad*).

To further illustrate this, two contrasting examples are presented below.

## Choosing the Battlefield of Badr

In the second year after Hijra (2 AH), the Battle of Badr took place during the time of the Prophet Muhammad. At that time, he was in Madinah and received news that a Quraysh army was advancing toward the city. The Prophet prepared an army and set out to confront them in the direction from which the *Quraysh* army was approaching. Before reaching Badr, the Prophet and his Companions camped at a certain location, indicating that if the enemy advanced, they would engage them there.

At this point, a Companion named Khabbab ibn al-Mundhir approached the Prophet and asked, “O Messenger of God, is this place where you have camped based on a revelation from God, or is it an opinion and a war strategy?” The Prophet replied that it was an opinion and a war strategy. Upon hearing this, the Companion said, “Then this is not the place to camp.” (*Sirah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 2, p. 259)

This was a clear case of objection. However, the Prophet did not take offence. Instead, he calmly asked the Companion why he held a differing view. The Companion explained his reasoning: there were several wells of water between their current position and the enemy. If they camped where they were and allowed the enemy to advance, the enemy would gain control of all the wells. Therefore, they should move forward and take control of the wells, ensuring access to water for themselves while denying it to the enemy. Upon hearing this explanation, the Prophet said, “You have suggested a good strategy.”



This conversation occurred in a completely open and normal environment. Ultimately, the Prophet approved the Companion's suggestion and acted upon it. This decision contributed to the decisive victory of the Muslims in the battle.

This example highlights the vital importance of a free environment for the expression of opinions in reaching the best decision. Differing perspectives can reveal new dimensions of a matter, proving invaluable in achieving the right outcome. The significance of this principle is so great that even when a differing opinion is expressed in a direct or forceful manner, it should be met with tolerance and a positive attitude.

### **The Consequences of Ignoring Criticism**

In 1831, Syed Ahmed Shaheed Barelvi (1786-1831) led a jihad against Maharaja Ranjit Singh with a Muslim army. This campaign took place in Balakot (*Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*). In the ensuing battle, Syed Ahmed Shaheed Barelvi and most of his Companions were killed by Ranjit Singh's forces. Ultimately, this fervent *jihad* ended in complete failure from a practical standpoint.

Most of the individuals in Syed Ahmed Shaheed Barelvi's army were his devoted followers. Among them was Maulana Mir Mahboob Ali Dehlvi (d. 1280 AH), a distinguished scholar of his time. He joined Syed Ahmed

Shaheed Bareilvi's army and travelled with them. The group camped at a location called Charsadda (now in Pakistan). Upon reaching there, Maulana Mir Mahboob Ali had a disagreement with Syed Ahmed Shaheed Bareilvi.

Maulana Mir Mahboob Ali documented this disagreement in his Arabic book, *Tareekh-ul-Aimma fi Khulafa-ul-Ummah*, which is preserved in the library of Jamia Hamdard (*Tughlaqabad*), Delhi. According to this account, Maulana Mir Mahboob Ali had a private meeting with Syed Ahmed Shaheed Bareilvi at Charsadda. During their discussion, he asked Syed Ahmed on what basis he had decided to launch a jihad against the Sikhs. Syed Ahmed replied that his decision was based on divine inspiration and dreams. Maulana Mir Mahboob Ali responded that such decisions could not be made solely on the basis of dreams and visions. He cited the Quranic verse: "And their affairs are conducted by mutual consultation among themselves" (42:38). He emphasized that the Prophet Muhammad always made decisions regarding *jihad* through consultation. Therefore, Syed Ahmed should consult others and carefully investigate the situation before taking any action.

However, Syed Ahmed Shaheed Bareilvi rejected Maulana Mir Mahboob Ali's advice. He argued that such criticism was undermining his mission and insisted that Maulana's obedience should be as unwavering as the mountain in front of them. As a result, Maulana Mir Mahboob Ali chose

to return to Delhi. Syed Ahmed reacted strongly to this decision, declaring: “Whoever leaves me and returns to his homeland has abandoned his faith.” (*Maulana Ismail Dehlvi aur Taqwiyat-ul-Imaan* by Maulana Shah Abu-al-Hasan Zaid Farooqi, pp. 86-87)

In some texts, this incident has been portrayed as evidence of Maulana Mir Mahboob Ali’s deviation. Maulana Syed Abdul Hai Hasani (1869-1923), the former principal of Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow, wrote that Maulana Mir Mahboob Ali was among the eminent scholars of his time. He pledged allegiance to jihad under Syed Ahmed Shaheed Bareilvi and travelled to Yaghistan to support him. However, the devil planted doubt in his heart, leading him to abandon Syed Ahmed and return to India. (*Nuzhat-ul-Khawatir* by Syed Abdul Hai, Vol. 7, pp. 406-407)

Syed Ahmed Shaheed Bareilvi did not consult anyone regarding his decision. He failed to verify reports of the desecration of Islamic symbols in Punjab. Additionally, he did not assess the military strength of Maharaja Ranjit Singh or the capacity of his own untrained followers to face such a formidable force. Driven by blind faith, he entered Ranjit Singh’s territory without a complete understanding of the geography. Unsurprisingly, the result was that Syed Ahmed and most of his Companions were killed by Ranjit Singh’s army. This campaign ended in a unilateral disaster for the Muslims.

This example underscores the critical importance of allowing the articulation of differing opinions in order to arrive at sound decisions in collective matters. Criticism should be welcomed with an open heart, and efforts should be made to reach the best decisions through scholarly discussions and debates.

In conclusion, listening to criticism and fostering open dialogue are essential for making informed and effective decisions. These processes ensure that actions are taken based on thorough investigation and mutual consultation. Ignoring criticism and suppressing dissent leads to disastrous outcomes, as demonstrated in the case of Syed Ahmed Shaheed Bareilvi. Therefore, creating an environment that encourages open dialogue and constructive criticism is vital for the progress and success of any community.

### **Principles Over Personalities**

An Islamic scholar once criticized his spiritual guide (Sheikh) on a scholarly matter. When someone pointed out that he was criticizing his Sheikh, the scholar replied, “We love our Sheikh, but the truth is dearer to us than the Sheikh.”

This response underscores an essential reality: when a critique is made, even if it appears to reference a particular individual, it is fundamentally a critique of a principle. Personal references in such cases are necessary, as without

them, the critique would lose specificity, becoming an ambiguous opinion that fails to achieve its purpose.

The process of criticism and differing opinions has been a consistent feature throughout Islamic history. The Companions of the Prophet often differed on various matters, expressing their disagreements openly. Similarly, the *Tabi'un* (Successors), *Taba' al-Tabi'in* (Successors of the Successors), hadith scholars, jurists, and other Islamic scholars frequently engaged in debates and openly expressed their dissent. These differences were never condemned, nor was it suggested that the practice of criticism and disagreement be abandoned. During the early period of Islamic history, such critiques and disagreements were accepted because they were understood as being rooted in principles, not in personal animosities. (For further details, refer to the author's book *Deen-e-Insaniyat*, chapter "*Hurriyat-e-Fikr*" [Freedom of Thought].

Listening to criticism with composure and reflecting upon it demonstrates that a person is not consumed by the grandeur of personalities. For such individuals, principles take precedence over personal affiliations. They may tolerate the undermining of an individual's stature but will not accept the violation of principles. This mindset reflects the presence of a true religious spirit.

However, when a nation enters a period of decline, the focus shifts from principles to personalities. People

become indifferent to principles and excessively sensitive about their revered figures. As a result, critique becomes anathema. When they hear criticism that appears to target their admired personalities, they react with agitation and hostility. This reaction, though seemingly directed at the critic, reveals a deeper issue: they have not yet experienced the profound joy of recognizing and prioritizing truth. For them, truth is inseparably tied to specific individuals rather than being valued for its own sake.

### **The Benefits of Criticism**

Criticism is not a vice; it is a blessing. It opens new dimensions of knowledge and brings to light previously unexplored aspects of an issue. Criticism is not merely fault-finding; it is, at its core, an intellectual exchange between the critic and the one being criticized, benefiting both parties equally. It broadens the intellectual horizons of everyone involved. True criticism is an intellectual gift from one person to another.

This is why the second Caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab, said, “May God bless the man who sends me the gift of my shortcomings.” (*Musnad Al-Darmi*, Athar No. 675)

The immense value of criticism is not just a theoretical concept to me; it is a matter of personal experience. If I were to say that I have an inherent appreciation for criticism, it would not be an exaggeration. Because of this

disposition, I encourage my close associates to engage with me intellectually through criticism.

An incident from my life illustrates this attitude. One of my colleagues, Maulana Anis Luqman Nadwi, worked closely with me for about eight years. When he later visited an Arab country, a Sheikh asked him about his role in India. He replied, "I am the critic of the biggest critic in India." This reflects my affinity for criticism and intellectual discourse.

For a true scholar, the most fulfilling experience is intellectual exchange. While criticism may appear to be directed at a person, its true focus is the subject matter under discussion. Genuine criticism transcends personal ego; it is not a matter of prestige or personal confrontation but an exploration of ideas and truth.

When criticism is valid, it provides an opportunity to correct errors and move from the darkness of flawed thinking to the light of accurate understanding. It helps a person grow intellectually and become more developed in their thoughts. Even when criticism is invalid, it serves the purpose of highlighting additional aspects of the subject. If the person being criticized responds calmly and with an open mind, criticism can strengthen their intellectual capabilities. It can stimulate creative thinking, enabling them to present their views more clearly and logically.

In truth, criticism is beneficial in every way, whether it is valid or not.

A personal experience further illustrates this point. In 1965, I was in Lucknow, where I met a non-Muslim scholar who did not believe in religion or religious figures. During our conversation, he criticized the Prophet Muhammad, saying, “If Muhammad were removed from history, what difference would it make?”

His words were certainly provocative. Had I reacted with anger, I might simply have rebuked him and walked away. But, by the grace of God, I maintained my composure. This enabled me to think constructively and respond calmly. I said, “It would make the same difference that existed in history before Muhammad.” In other words, history would be deprived of exactly what it lacked before his advent.

This criticism compelled me to reflect on an aspect of the Prophet’s life I had not previously considered. The observation led me to realize that all modern scientific and cultural advancements emerged after the Prophet’s advent. This insight inspired a formal study, culminating in my book, *“Islam: The Creator of the Modern Age.”*

This experience demonstrates that when one approaches criticism with composure and an open mind, it can be a profound source of growth and discovery.



## **True Standards and False Standards**

One significant drawback of an imitative mindset is its inability to recognize truth on its own merits. Instead, individuals with such a mindset identify truth through their revered figures, making these figures their primary point of reference. Whatever their assumed elders declare as truth is accepted without question. Conversely, when someone outside their circle of reverence presents a matter—regardless of the strength of evidence—they remain unwilling to accept it. This stems from their lack of ability to discern and embrace truth based solely on evidence.

This has been the single most significant reason for the rejection of prophets in every era. A prophet would appear to his contemporaries as an unfamiliar figure—someone outside the lineage of their presumed revered ancestors. As a result, they could not grant him the status of an important or noteworthy person during his lifetime. Furthermore, when the prophet criticized their beloved figures, they became even more infuriated and refused to consider his message seriously.

The fundamental difference between an imitative mind and an independent mind lies in their approach to truth. People with an imitative mindset recognize truth only through personalities, while those with an independent mindset can discern and accept truth based on pure reasoning.

This difference results in those with imitative mindsets being deprived of what holds the utmost importance in religion: faith that arises from realization. The wellspring of such faith lies in self-discovery. Those with imitative mindsets fail to think independently, and as a result, they remain unacquainted with the true essence of Islam.

In contrast, individuals with an independent mindset are fundamentally different. Their minds remain open to reflection and thought. They have the capability to recognize truth as soon as it becomes evident and to embrace it without hesitation.

In today's world, the greatest achievement for any individual is the discovery of truth. Realizing that one has found the truth is undoubtedly life's greatest blessing. However, this blessing is reserved for those with an independent mindset. Those trapped in the darkness of an imitative mindset can never experience truth as understood through *maarif* (realization).

### **The Need for a Transformative Mindset**

Shah Waliullah (d. 1762), a distinguished Islamic scholar and theologian from India, addressed the concept of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and the qualifications of a *mujtahid* (one who exercises *ijtihad*) in his book, *Aqd al-Jayyid fi Ahkam al-Ijtihad wa al-Taqlid* (p. 4). He outlined that

a mujtahid must possess five essential types of knowledge:

1. Knowledge of the Book of God (Quran),
2. Knowledge of the Sunnah of the Prophet,
3. Knowledge of the statements of early scholars, encompassing both consensus and disagreements,
4. Proficiency in the Arabic language,
5. Understanding of *qiyas* (analogical reasoning) and *istinbat* (inference).

While Shah Waliullah and other scholars accurately outlined these qualifications, they are primarily applicable to restricted forms of *ijtihad*. For unrestricted *ijtihad*, these qualifications alone are insufficient.

### Two Types of Ijtihad: General and Special

Ijtihad can be categorized into two types: general *ijtihad* and special *ijtihad*. General *ijtihad* addresses external conditions, while special *ijtihad* pertains to internal conditions—those deeper, underlying aspects of a phenomenon that may not be immediately apparent. The distinction can be articulated as follows: general *ijtihad* relates to *basarat* (physical vision), whereas special *ijtihad* requires *basirat* (insight).

For instance, if a mujtahid needs to determine whether the *Shariah* ruling allowing wiping over leather socks (*mas-h'ala al-khuffayn*) applies to modern, factory-made socks,

expertise in the five key disciplines is sufficient. Similarly, if the question arises about whether inserting a needle into the body breaks ablution (*wudu*), then knowledge of these five sciences would also be sufficient to derive a ruling on this matter.

### **The Need for an Additional Qualification**

A mujtahid proficient in these five areas can consult classical jurisprudential texts and identify relevant precedents. For instance, they might examine rulings addressing whether the sting of a scorpion entering a person's body nullifies *wudu*.

However, for special *ijtihad*, an additional qualification is required beyond the foundational five disciplines. This requirement is highlighted in the Hadith: "A wise person must be aware of his time" (*Sahih Ibn Hibban*, Hadith No. 807)—that is, its spirit, needs, and demands. This emphasizes that a wise individual must possess a thorough understanding of the conditions and complexities of their era.

The additional qualification mentioned in the Hadith can be summarized as an awareness of the conditions of one's time. A mujtahid must be thoroughly familiar with the context of the era and location in which they are exercising *ijtihad*. This necessitates an understanding of both traditional and contemporary sciences. Such expertise is acquired through external information, deep reflection, and comprehensive knowledge of relevant facts.

Examples of unrestricted or creative *ijtihad* are abundant in Islamic history. One notable example is the Treaty of *Hudaybiyyah* during the Madinan period. At the time of this treaty, the external conditions seemed entirely unfavourable for the Muslims, as the ten-year non-aggression pact was agreed upon unconditionally on the opponents' terms. Accepting this treaty was extremely challenging for the Companions; so much so that Umar ibn al-Khattab referred to it as a humiliation (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3182).

The true nature of this event can be understood from the Quranic verse: "God knew what you did not" (48:27). While the visible aspects appeared disadvantageous, hidden factors were at play. Guided by divine wisdom, the Prophet established this treaty based on these unseen realities.

An external aspect of the *Hudaybiyyah* treaty was that it was conducted under the unilateral conditions set by the opponents of the Muslims. However, beneath this lay the deeper reality: the state of war had previously halted interactions between Muslims and others in a normal environment. A no-war pact would allow people from both sides to meet freely and engage in dialogue. This process would naturally lead to the virtues of Islam becoming evident, fulfilling the Quranic description: "people entering God's religion in multitudes" (110:2).

This is exactly what happened. At the time of the *Hudaybiyyah* treaty, the Muslim population numbered

fewer than 1,500. However, within two years of peaceful conditions, their numbers grew to 10,000. This remarkable increase in strength, achieved without a single battle, enabled Muslims to gain dominance through their sheer numerical presence.

A similar event occurred in the 13th century when the Mongols, a warlike and militarily powerful force, invaded the Muslim world. Their campaigns devastated Muslim cities from Samarkand to Aleppo and brought an end to the Abbasid Caliphate. The severity of the situation was such that Muslims would say, "If you hear that the Tartars have been defeated, do not believe it" (*Al-Kamil fi at-Tarikh* by Ibn al-Athir al-Jazari, vol. 10, p. 353).

This was the external reality. However, beneath the surface lay another truth: while the Mongols wielded military might, they lacked a cohesive ideology or worldview. Through their interactions with Muslims, the Mongols were exposed to the ideology of Islam. Unable to counter its intellectual and spiritual appeal, many of them accepted the teachings of Islam. This significant development was aptly summarized by the Orientalist Philip K. Hitti: "The religion of the Muslims had conquered where their arms had failed" (*History of the Arabs*, P. K. Hitti, 1989, p. 488).

Consider a later period. The first clear example in this context is that of Shah Waliullah Dehlawi. During his time, the Mughal Empire in India had weakened and appeared to be on the verge of collapse. Shah Waliullah dedicated

his efforts to stabilizing the Muslim empire. He urged the Muslim rulers of his era to take up arms and fight their enemies to defeat them. (*Al-Tafhimat al-Ilahiyyah* by Shah Waliullah, 1936, Vol. 1, pp. 215-216). He also encouraged Ahmad Shah Abdali, the ruler of Kabul, to invade India to diminish the power of the Sikhs and Marathas, thereby securing the Mughal Empire.

However, Shah Waliullah's approach appears to have been shaped by immediate and visible circumstances. He remained unaware of the new global wave that was gradually emerging—what may be called the era of democracy. Shah Waliullah regarded himself as *Qayem-uz-Zaman*, the reviver of his age (*Fuyooz ul Haramain*, p. 111). Yet his overall thought process continued to operate within the framework of a bygone monarchical order. He did not grasp the significance of the coming democratic age, in which the principle of popular sovereignty would become dominant and give rise to the critical question of majority and minority relations.

Had Shah Waliullah understood the direction of these changing times, he might have concentrated his efforts on introducing Islam to the world. The essence of this work was that, even if the Mughal Empire were to fall, Muslims could still maintain a strong and influential position. Unfortunately, Shah Waliullah failed to recognize the transformative importance of introducing Islam to the world. His renowned book *Hujjatullah al-Baligha* covers

numerous subjects but does not include a chapter on *introducing Islam to the world*.

Now, consider the example of Syed Jamaluddin Afghani (d. 1897). During his time, the British and French had established near-total political dominance over the Muslim world. Syed Jamaluddin Afghani devoted his life to ending this political subjugation. His slogan was, “The East for the Easterners” (*Al-Sharq lil-Sharqiyin*). Superficially, it may appear that the political dominance of Western nations has ended, as around sixty independent Muslim countries have since emerged on the world map. However, in reality, the situation remains largely unchanged, with Muslim nations still compelled to live under Western supremacy.

The reason is that Al-Afghani viewed the situation mainly in political terms and failed to grasp its deeper reality. He viewed British and French dominance as purely political, overlooking the foundational issue: Western nations had achieved remarkable advancements in knowledge, science, and technology, outpacing Muslims. With his traditional political perspective, Syed Jamaluddin Afghani was unable to grasp these deeper dimensions of the problem.

Had Syed Jamaluddin Afghani recognized the critical importance of intellectual and scientific progress in the modern era, he might have dismissed external dominance as a temporary concern. Instead, he could have focused his efforts on advancing Muslim intellectual development to match that of the West. By prioritizing intellectual *jihad*



over futile political struggles and guiding his followers toward this path, the history of Muslim nations could have taken a very different path.

These examples illustrate that the aforementioned five qualifications are indeed sufficient for restricted *ijtihad*. However, for unrestricted *ijtihad*, an additional qualification is indispensable: a profound understanding of contemporary circumstances and emerging realities. Without this additional insight, any attempt at *ijtihad* will ultimately prove fruitless and fail to provide meaningful guidance to the community.

# ISSUES OF IJTIHAD

## INTERPRETATION BASED ON PERSONAL INSIGHT

**I**nterpreting the Quran based on one's personal opinion without proper knowledge and understanding is a sinful act. If someone deliberately misrepresents the meaning of any verse in the Quran, it is regarded as distortion (*tahrif*) (Quran 2:75), and such distortion is undoubtedly an unforgivable offence in the eyes of the Quran.

This matter is so delicate that even if someone interprets the Quran accurately—yet does so solely based on personal opinion—there remains a risk of it leading to sin. A hadith states that the Prophet Muhammad said: “Whoever speaks about the Book of God based on his own opinion, and even if he is right, he has still made a mistake.” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 3652)

Explaining the Quran's meaning without meeting the proper requirements for interpretation—and relying solely on one's own reasoning—is a careless approach. Therefore, even if such an individual's interpretation happens to be correct by chance, they are still considered at fault due to their reckless method. Such a person cannot be rewarded for arriving at the right interpretation.

Based on a literal reading of the hadith, some believe that interpreting the Quran should be confined to what is recorded in hadith or explained by early Muslim scholars. From this perspective, later Muslims are expected only to repeat the opinions and interpretations of the earliest commentators. However, this hadith should not be taken to mean that Quranic interpretation must be restricted exclusively to explanations found in hadith, early reports, or the statements of the first scholars.

The Quran itself states that it is a blessed book which We have sent down to you so that people may ponder its verses, and so that those with understanding may learn a lesson from it (38:29). Since the Quran is meant to be reflected upon by every reader, this cannot mean that one should only read the earlier interpretations and simply repeat them. The very word “reflection” demonstrates that readers of the Quran are expected to think deeply and uncover new meanings, which will strengthen their understanding and faith. Without this quality, the Quran could not be a source of guidance or a means of increasing faith. True insight comes through discovering new meanings—not by repeating a few familiar and limited ideas.

This is not merely a matter of reasoning; it is also fully supported by Hadith. According to one narration, the Prophet of Islam said, “Its wonders will never cease” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2906). Another narration states,

“Its wonders will never be exhausted.” (*Sunan al-Darmi*, Hadith No. 3375). These “wonders” refer to the deeper meanings of the Quran—indicating that its meanings are so vast that scholars across all eras will continue to discover new insights. And this process will persist until the Day of Judgment.

Throughout history, people have continued to discover new meanings and insights in the verses of the Quran—a process known as *istinbat*. Examples of this can be found in every book of Quranic commentary. This process is ongoing even today. For instance, the Quran, under the command to gather strength, instructs the preparation of warhorses (8:60). In modern times, warhorses have been replaced by contemporary war machines. Consequently, scholars now explain that, due to changing circumstances, this verse should be understood as referring to the preparation of war machines and technology instead of horses. This is because warhorses no longer offer the strategic advantage mentioned in the verse as the goal of gathering strength; that advantage is now linked to mechanical and technological power.

The Quran has always been a source of intellectual and scholarly growth for Muslims. Its most significant feature is that it challenges the human mind and continually encourages reflection and deep thought. Due to its infinite meanings, the Quran acts as a foundation for intellectual development among Muslims. Shutting the door to new discoveries in

such a book would contradict its very purpose. If that were to occur, Muslims would face intellectual stagnation. They would neither advance themselves nor will they be able to lead humanity in knowledge and thought.

The fact is, there are two types of interpretations of the Quran. One is the interpretation carried out with careful reflection, and the other is done without it. The second type is known as *Tafsir bil-ra'y*—interpreting based on personal opinion. Interpreting with reflection means the reader should have a strong understanding of the Arabic language, as well as knowledge of Hadith and early Islamic sources. He shouldn't interpret the Quran by focusing on just one verse in isolation, but should consider the overall message and purpose of the Quran as a whole. He should also have deep knowledge of other subjects related to the Quran. Similarly, he should be well-acquainted with the interpretations offered by recognised religious scholars from the earliest times to later periods. Alongside all this, he should cultivate the quality of piety within himself, which the Quran describes as the source of true knowledge (*Al-Baqarah*: 282). This is the proper way to interpret the Quran.

In contrast, *tafsir bil-ra'y* (interpretation based on personal opinion) occurs when someone relies solely on their own reasoning. Any thought that occurs to them about a verse, they start to present it as the Quran's interpretation—regardless of whether it fits the context of the verse or aligns with the Quran's overall teachings. Here are some examples of such personal interpretations.

1. One type of *tafsir bil-ra'y* is so inappropriate that any serious-minded person would reject it immediately after hearing or reading it. For example, the Quranic verse says: "*Wa rabbaka fakabbir*" (74:3). Some people have translated this as: "And make your Lord great."

Based on this translation, they explained the verse to mean: Establish God's political greatness in the world, raise the flag of God's rule on earth. This translation and interpretation are among the worst forms of opinion-based interpretation. Common sense alone is enough to see that it's wrong. God is already great in Himself. He doesn't need any of His creation to make Him great in any way. According to the verse, what a person must do is recognize God's greatness within their own heart and mind. A sense of God's majesty should fill their soul. Realizing their own smallness and God's greatness should make them a truly humble human being—a man cut to size. That is the real meaning of "declare the greatness of your Lord."

The correct translation of the mentioned verse is: "And proclaim the greatness of your Lord," or "Speak of the greatness of your Lord," or "Declare the greatness of your Lord." According to this translation, the *takbeer* (the declaration of God's greatness) mentioned in the verse is not related to any external political issue. Instead, it concerns a person's inner state. It means that a person's mind should consciously recognize God's greatness. Their heart should be stirred with the feeling of His greatness. The acknowledgment of God's greatness should naturally

come to their lips. This is the *takbeer* of the Lord that the Quran instructs.

2. At the beginning of the Quran, there is a verse: “*Dhalika al-kitab la rayba fihi*” (2:2), which means: “This is the Book (from God); there is no doubt in it,” or, “This is a Book in which there is no doubt.” There is some disagreement about the grammatical structure of this verse. However, every commentator has understood “*al-kitab*” here to mean an actual book. One person, however, has written that all commonly accepted translations that render “*dhalika al-kitab*” as “book” are incorrect. According to him, the Quran is a treasure of all knowledge. Therefore, the closest translation of “*dhalika al-kitab*” would be: “This is an encyclopedia.”

This translation is clearly based on personal opinion rather than on factual knowledge. An encyclopedia is a book that compiles various kinds of information. However, the Quran is not an encyclopedic collection of facts. Instead, it is a compilation of knowledge and insight. It is certainly a treasure of wisdom but not, in the traditional sense of the word, a storehouse of facts.

For example, the Islamic declaration of faith is *La ilaha illallah Muhammadur Rasulallah*—“There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.” Yet, this full statement does not appear in one place in the Quran. In Islam, five daily prayers are obligatory, but the Quran



does not specify this number clearly. In an encyclopedia, when people are mentioned, their year of birth and death are usually included. But in the Quran, the birth or death year of the Prophet—or of any other prophet—is not mentioned. There are thousands of such factual details that are simply absent from the Quran. Therefore, translating the word *kitab* (book) in the Quranic verse as “encyclopedia” is a personal idea. There is no scholarly basis for it.

3. In the Quran, there is a command expressed in the words: “*Aqeemuddeen*” (42:13). A simple translation of this verse is: “you should remain steadfast in religion.” Some people have interpreted this to mean that “ad-deen” refers to all the religious and legal rulings found in the Quran and Hadith. According to this view, the verse is instructing believers to implement all these religious rulings in the world as a complete system.

However, this interpretation clearly falls within personal opinion because it contradicts well-established principles for understanding the Quran. For example, this verse specifically commands the establishment of the part of religion that was traditionally associated with Prophet Noah, Prophet Abraham, Prophet Moses, Prophet Jesus, and Prophet Muhammad. Due to this specific wording, all commentators agree that “*ad-deen*” here refers solely to the core teachings of religion. This is because the common message of these prophets was limited to these foundational

teachings. Regarding detailed laws, the Quran itself (5:48) states that these varied from one prophet to another.

The instruction in this verse is: “You should remain steadfast in religion and not become divided in it.” (Quran 42:13) Since unity in religion can only be achieved through its core teachings, this command to “remain steadfast” should be understood as referring solely to those fundamental principles. Including all legal rulings within its scope would inevitably lead to division—the very outcome the verse warns against.

### **Interpretation Through Reflection**

Usually, Quranic interpretation is understood to fall into two categories: *Tafsir bil Ma'thur* (interpretation based on transmitted reports) and *Tafsir bil Ra'y* (interpretation based on personal reasoning). However, there is another form of interpretation that can be described as interpretation through reflection. Trying to understand the Quran in light of Hadith, historical reports, and the sayings of early scholars is undoubtedly important and necessary. But to discover more of the Quran's deeper meanings, the process of reflecting on it will continue in every era. As long as this is done within acceptable limits, this effort will never come to an end. Here is an example from the Quran that makes this clearer:

In chapter 12 of the Quran, the story of Prophet Joseph

(Yusuf (Joseph)) is told. It describes how he was placed in charge of Egypt's land resources. During a time of famine, people were provided with grain through his special arrangements. At that time, his brothers came to Egypt from Canaan to collect grain. After receiving their share, they began their return journey. Then an incident occurred: officials of the royal court found a royal item in the grain loaded on the camel of Prophet Joseph's younger brother, Benjamin. As a result, Benjamin was accused of theft and taken into custody, then handed over to Prophet Joseph.

The usual interpretation of these Quranic verses is that Prophet Joseph recognized his brother Benjamin and wanted to keep him with him. But since he didn't want to reveal his identity, he came up with a plan: when the brothers were being given their grain, he ordered that a royal drinking cup (*siqayah*) be secretly placed in Benjamin's luggage. Then, as the group was about to leave with their grain, it is said—God forbid—that Prophet Joseph had the caravan stopped and their belongings searched. As planned, the royal cup was found in Benjamin's bag. Then, again—God forbid—Joseph declared him a thief and kept him there, telling the other brothers to return home.

This interpretation clearly casts doubt on the character of a prophet. But when these Quranic verses are studied more closely, it becomes clear that there is another, more accurate interpretation. In this second explanation, Prophet Joseph is shown to be completely free of blame.

This second interpretation comes from a close reading of the Quranic account of Joseph, found in Chapter 12 of the Quran, known as Surah Yusuf (Joseph)Yusuf (Joseph)eph), verses 70–76. These verses explain that when Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) (Joseph) (Joseph) prepared his brothers’ travel supplies, he secretly placed his own drinking cup in his brother Benjamin’s luggage. Then, after the caravan had set off, the royal officials noticed that their measuring cup was missing. They called out to stop the caravan and said they suspected someone had stolen their silver measuring cup. The caravan was stopped, and the brothers’ belongings were searched. Eventually, the cup was found in Benjamin’s luggage. According to the law of Canaan, Benjamin was then detained and handed over to Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) (Joseph). In this way, Yusuf (Joseph) (Joseph) was able to keep the brother he wanted to stay with him.

If we look closely at the words used in these verses, we notice a meaningful point. This point is hidden in the shift of pronouns, based on Arabic grammar. The item Yusuf (Joseph) (Joseph) placed in his brother’s luggage is called *siqayah* (verse 70)—a feminine noun in Arabic. But when the court officials later found the item during the search, the Quran uses the feminine pronoun “*ha*” (in “*thumma istakhrajaha*”—“then he took it out”) instead of the masculine “*hu*.”

When we consider this difference of conscience, the

situation that emerges is this: Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) (Joseph), out of brotherly love, had placed his own drinking cup along with the travel provisions in his brother's belongings. The palace officials knew about this. However, during this time, another, more important item from the palace—a “*sawa*” (a measure used for weighing grain)—was hidden among the belongings and wasn't easily seen. In their hurry, the palace officials focused their attention on the caravan members, suspected them, stopped them, and searched their belongings. During this search, they didn't find the measure “*sawa*” they were looking for, but they did find the drinking cup (*saqayah*) among Binyamin's belongings. Thus, they detained Benjamin in accordance with the very law invoked by Joseph's brothers, for—as the Quran relates—they themselves had said:

The Egyptians asked, “If we find that you are lying, what penalty should we impose on you?” They replied, “The penalty should be that the one in whose saddlebag it is found will be held as a bondman to atone for the crime. That is how we punish the wrongdoers.” (12:74-75)

This whole event was carried out by the palace officials on their own, without any order from Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) (Joseph). That is why God has attributed this event to Himself and said:

“This is how We planned for Yusuf (Joseph). He could not take his brother under the king's law

except by God's will. We raise to high ranks whom We please, and above every knowledgeable person is one more knowledgeable." (Quran 12:76) This explanation matches the Quran's wording and also fits with the prophetic greatness of Yusuf (Joseph).

Similarly, the Quran commands the believers: "Prepare any strength you can muster against them, and any cavalry with which you can overawe God's enemy and your own enemy as well, and others besides them whom you do not know, but who are known to God." (8:60)

A contemporary Arab commentator interprets this verse as a call for the "*liberation of humanity*." In his view, the command to equip the believers with strength was intended to free all people from every form of bondage—for example, from communism, Nazism, secularism, and Zionism.

At first glance, this interpretation may seem revolutionary. In reality, however, it is rooted in personal opinion. Without close reflection on the actual wording of the Quran, the commentator has projected his own preconceived ideas onto the verse. A careful reading shows that the stated purpose of preparing force is to overawe the enemy so that they lack the courage to commit aggression against the believers. In other words, the command is framed in a defensive context, whereas the commentator has understood it in an offensive sense.

## DIALOGUE, NOT WARS

Muslims around the world today face destruction and humiliation. This period of hardship has lasted throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. For two hundred years, from Sultan Tipu (1751-1799) of India to Yasir Arafat (1929-2004) of Palestine, this cycle of destruction has continued, and there are still no signs it will end. The cause of this destruction is not inactivity; instead, it happens amid ongoing and intense action. It would not be an overstatement to say that Muslims worldwide have sacrificed more lives and wealth in these two centuries than in the entire rest of Islamic history. So why, despite all this action and sacrifice, have Muslims in the modern age failed to achieve honour and dominance? The Quran and Hadith clearly promise that God will never waste the efforts of true believers and will grant them success over those who oppose them.

The answer to this question is that today's Muslim leaders have chosen the wrong approach for their efforts. They have not carried out their work in the way that would bring God's help. Indeed, success in this world belongs

only to those whom God blesses with His support. Without God's help, success is impossible. The truth is that God has promised His help to those who follow the prophetic model in their efforts.

This prophetic model aims to make people aware of God and His divine plan through peaceful dialogue. The true success of believers depends on this same model established by the Prophet. However, Muslim leaders today have been heavily influenced by the Sultanate model, which focuses on political power and confrontation, set up by later Muslim rulers. As a result, they have based all their movements on this model. This shift is the main reason for the current destruction of Muslims. Muslim leaders observed that later Muslim sultans expanded into different regions with armed forces, defeated existing governments' armies, and established their own rule.

The Sultanate model became so dominant that most Muslim histories written afterward focused on it. Today's Muslim leaders read these histories and mistakenly think that the Sultanate model is the only way for Islamic movements. Whether intentionally or not, they accept the Sultanate model as the standard, and in the name of armed jihad, they spread it everywhere. This mistake is the main cause of Muslims' downfall today.

The proper Islamic model is illustrated by Prophet Muhammad and other prophets. It is a model based on



making people aware of the message of their Creator. The message should be communicated logically, adjusted to the audience's comprehension level. Completely avoiding violence is essential, and a peaceful campaign should continue. Every effort must be made to prevent environments of hatred or conflict in society. A peaceful environment has always facilitated the growth of Islam, whereas instability has consistently hindered it. This was a guiding principle of the Prophet Muhammad, through which he advanced the religion to a position of prominence and influence. In the prophetic model, dialogue served as the primary method—encompassing both initial engagement and sustained exchange of ideas.

Sometimes, as a rare exception, a defensive clash may occur with someone, and that only happens when all efforts at avoidance have failed, and due to one-sided aggression, believers are temporarily forced to fight in self-defense. Even before this temporary defense, the process of bringing humans closer to God was ongoing, and it will continue afterward as well. In the prophetic model, purification of the soul is the main approach, and fighting, as an exceptional case, is limited to temporary self-defense.

In today's world, revolutions have taken place globally. Consequently, the overall situation has been transformed completely. These changes have made armed conflicts unnecessary. Now, it is possible to achieve the goals of

elevating Islam and the Muslim community to a position of dignity solely through peaceful dialogue.

In ancient times, believers had to work hard to spread their religion in a setting of religious oppression. Today, this work can be done freely in an environment of religious freedom. In the past, prophets had to undertake challenging journeys to share the truth. Now, modern communication allows the message of truth to spread quickly and reach people worldwide.

In ancient times, the bearers of truth had to spread their message amid many superstitions. Today, the scientific revolution has nearly eliminated superstitions, making it easier to share the message of truth in an open intellectual environment. In earlier eras, the economy relied solely on agriculture, so those sharing the truth had to work with limited resources. Now, after the industrial revolution, this work—like other tasks—can be done abundantly, whereas before, it was constrained to just economic means and so on.

It is a fact that modern changes have significantly increased the effectiveness and importance of media and communication. However, the leaders of today's Muslim world were only familiar with the traditional model of power, which is the method of political confrontation. They remained completely unaware of the emerging power of ideology. In an act of profound misjudgment, they steered the whole community toward the imperial model—one

based on political confrontation—thereby causing harm not only to the community but also to themselves.

### **Double Mistake**

In the modern age, the old monarchical model had become disastrously ineffective. Still, two hundred years of failed attempts haven't managed to change the ignorance of incapable Muslim leaders. Even though the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were completely lost, they still seem to view that old monarchical model as the standard approach in the twenty-first century. Today, this failed monarchical model is repeated in two ways: first, when rulers try to adopt it, and second, when non-governmental individuals or groups attempt to follow it.

Sultan Tipu is an example of the first type—he tried to restore monarchical power but failed. He couldn't see beyond the old royal system. In 1799, he died fighting a reckless war against the British. Similarly, Saddam Hussein, the former president of Iraq, is a modern example of someone who failed by following this same monarchical model. Following this, the second type of experiment within this model emerged—when non-governmental groups began fighting against perceived enemies. The earliest example of this likely occurred in 1831, when Maulana Syed Ahmad Barelvi and his companions' caravan was destroyed in a battle against Maharaja Ranjit in Balakot. Later, in 1857,

another major event of this kind happened when a group of Indian Muslim scholars launched an armed jihad against the British. Since then, non-governmental organizations have continued a long series of failed attempts using the monarchical model, which persists to this day.

In places like Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Chechnya, the Philippines, Arakan, and many others, violent armed conflicts are occurring in the name of jihad. These illustrate the second type of experience with the Sultanate model. This second type, which began through non-governmental organizations using guerrilla warfare, proxy wars, and similar tactics, proved to be even more deadly than the first. It involved two errors at the same time: first, the anachronistic attempt to apply the old conflict-based model in an age of peaceful dialogue and negotiation; and second, and more serious, mistake was that this approach was entirely wrong under Islamic law (*Shariah*). This is because it is well-known that only an established government has the right to conduct armed warfare. Non-governmental groups are not permitted to declare someone an enemy and start armed conflict against them.

If the Sultanate model in the first case was simply ignorance, then in the second, it represented ignorance combined with a clear violation of *Shariah*. This double mistake explains why recent armed *jihad* led by Muslim leaders has completely failed. The cause is not a foreign conspiracy, as many scholars and intellectuals often claim without

evidence. The Sultanate model is fundamentally different from peaceful ideological dialogue. The peaceful dialogue model creates an environment fully aligned with Islam. In contrast, the Sultanate model fosters an environment that is completely opposed to Islamic principles.

An example of this is the Kashmir issue with Pakistan. The idea of Pakistan was entirely shaped by Sultanate thinking. If Pakistani leaders had adopted the peaceful interfaith dialogue approach, they would never have discussed dividing the land. Their thinking was influenced by the old Sultanate model, which focuses solely on political power, with no regard for interfaith engagement. As a result, they initiated the movement for partition, which fueled hatred across the Indian subcontinent. And all avenues for ideological dialogue came to a standstill.

This un-Islamic and unwise politics entered its second phase in 1947. When the region gained independence from British rule on August 15, 1947, there were two major state problems: Hyderabad and Kashmir. In Hyderabad, Hindus were the majority, but the ruler was Muslim. In Kashmir, Muslims were the majority, but the ruler was Hindu. The question was what the political future of these two states would be. The Nawab of Hyderabad formally decided to join Pakistan, while the Raja of Kashmir signed papers to join India. To end this dispute, the leadership in New Delhi made a practical offer. They told the Pakistani leaders: You withdraw your claim on Hyderabad, and we will withdraw

our claim on Kashmir. This would end the dispute, and both countries could begin developing on a moderate path. Supporting this offer, the Quran clearly instructs: “Then if they should be inclined to make peace, make peace with them” (8:61). This means that if the other side offers peace, you should accept it immediately. However, Pakistani leaders, who were deeply influenced by the traditional Sultanate model and guided by a governing mindset, felt unable to accede to this significant offer. The great destruction that followed is well-known to everyone. The Pakistani leaders’ inexplicable ignorance regarding Kashmir is confirmed by historical records. This issue can be studied in detail in the following books.

1. *Looking Back* by Marchand Mahajan.
2. *Witness to an Era* by Frank Morris.
3. *Emergence of Pakistan* by Chaudhry Muhammad Ali.
4. *The Nation that Lost its Soul* by Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan.

The traditional state-centred outlook of Pakistan’s leaders made it difficult for them to resolve the Kashmir issue through negotiations. They then made an even more serious mistake by imagining that the issue could be settled through military means. First, they directly engaged India in armed conflict, but this attempt ended in complete failure. Still, their authoritarian mindset prevented them from adopting a more realistic approach. So, they launched

a covert war against India in Kashmir—commonly called a “proxy war.” This proxy war not only caused destruction for both Pakistan and Kashmir but also clearly went against Islamic teachings. In Islam, it is necessary to formally declare war before engaging in it: “Throw their treaty back at them, so as to be on equal terms”. (8:58).

To justify this un-Islamic and unwise war against India, Pakistan made several serious mistakes. For example, it turned its foreign policy and media completely into tools for defaming India and spreading hatred against it. Even though Pakistan was fully involved in the guerrilla war—or proxy war—in Kashmir, it kept claiming it had no direct role in the conflict. Yet the whole world knows that the militancy in Kashmir is entirely supported by Pakistan.

At the same time, to appear as a peaceful nation, Pakistani leaders repeatedly signed peace agreements: the Tashkent Agreement (1965), the Simla Agreement (1976), and the Lahore Declaration (1998).

Despite all such agreements and declarations, Pakistan’s leaders continued to act in ways that were contrary to Islamic principles. On paper, they repeatedly said that the Kashmir issue should be resolved through peaceful talks, not war. However, these agreements seemed more for show because Pakistan never actually stopped its secret military operations after signing them. According to the Quran, it is essential for Muslims to honour both the words and the

spirit of any agreement: “Keep your promises; you will be called to account for every promise which you have made” (Quran 17 34). If Pakistani leaders were to move beyond their authoritarian model and think within a framework of peaceful outreach, they would realize that the Quran offers clear guidance. The Quran explains that every individual and every nation will face hardship in this world. What should people do in such situations? The answer is found in this verse of the Quran: “so that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor be exultant over what you have gained” (57 23).

This verse from the Quran offers guidance for Pakistani leaders: they should willingly accept the loss of Kashmir, just as they were forced to accept the loss of East Pakistan in 1971. They need to end their current despair-driven policy on Kashmir. In other words, they should recognize the current reality (status quo) regarding Kashmir and foster moderate relations with India. Instead of pursuing a negative political course, they should adopt a positive approach. Doing so will finally open the door to progress —a door that has remained closed for more than half a century.

### **Summary of the Discussion**

Now, in the 21st century, it is essential for Muslim leaders to act in the true spirit of repentance. This involves openly acknowledging the historic mistake made over the past two centuries. They must reorient their Islamic



engagement around the principles of personal growth, intellectual development, and peaceful religious dialogue. Only such honest self-correction can begin to reverse the current decline.

## DIVINE REASONING

The Quran mainly contains two types of teachings. The first includes commandments, and the second involves thought and reflection. While the first is practical, the second is intellectual. Both are presented briefly and in summary form in the Quran. It is the responsibility of Islamic scholars to explain these summaries in detail using the guidance of the Quran and Hadith. When it comes to commandments, their detailed explanation has been developed over time through Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). This has been carried out extensively and can generally be seen as a successful effort.

Regarding teachings on thought and reflection, although much has been done over the past thousand years, it has mostly been unsatisfactory. It is fair to say that the writings in this area have been heavily influenced by the ideas of their time, which has often caused the true spirit of the Quran to be overlooked.

The first group to study this subject is known as the “*mutakallimun*” (Islamic theologians). This group first

emerged during the Abbasid Caliphate. Notable members include Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE), Ibn Rushd (d. 1198 CE), and Al-Razi (d. 1210 CE). To explain Quranic ideas and reflections, they adopted a model based on Greek philosophy. This philosophy relied on deductive reasoning, which, by its very nature, is an unrealistic approach. Consequently, their detailed explanations of the Quran's intellectual teachings often led to the saying, "He who becomes too caught up in logic loses sight of the truth." A line of poetry from a Persian poet describes this entire body of work quite well.

"Philosophy cannot uncover the truth.  
It only made the secret even more mysterious."

The second group in this context is the one that attempted to explain the Quran's rational thinking through the concept of *Wahdat al-Wujood* (Unity of Being). This can be summarised in one phrase: monistic rationalism. Well-known books from this group include *Al-Futuhat al-Makkiyah* by Ibn Arabi, *Masnawi* by Maulana Rumi, and *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* by Allama Iqbal. This method, which we are calling monistic rationalism, was even more problematic than the earlier Greek rationalism. If the first approach could be described as a logical riddle, then the second method amounted to a significant intellectual divergence. It reinterpreted the Islamic belief in the oneness of God (*Tawheed*) into the idea of *Wahdat al-Wujood* (Monism).

However, in Islam, *Tawheed* is based on the principle of monotheism—not monism. The concept of *Wahdat al-Wujood* is completely misleading, while the idea of Oneness of God captures the true spirit of Islam.

In modern times, a different group of Muslim writers appeared who linked Islamic rationality with political ideology. They aimed to express Islamic teachings through political language. For instance, they interpreted *La ilaha illallah* (There is no god but God) as *La hakim illallah* (There is no ruler but God). This group includes figures like Sayyid Qutb from Egypt and Sayyid Abul A‘la Maududi from Pakistan. In reality, political rationalism limited Islamic thought. In this view, the wide and universal nature of Islamic belief was narrowed down to the restricted field of politics.

This political interpretation also led to another harmful consequence. Those influenced by it believed their main goal was to dismantle the existing political system and create a new one based on their own envisioned model. In this way, this political mindset fostered a form of destructive politics within the Muslim world—similar to what was seen among followers of communism.

According to the Quran, the proper mode of reflection and contemplation is what may be termed divine rationalism. This approach involves engaging with the signs and messages of the Quran as a framework for studying the

world created by God, and interpreting reality through the lens of nature. It is through this synthesis of revelation and observation that genuine and meaningful learning occurs. Such reflection nurtures believers who are deeply conscious of God and imbued with reverence for Him. This truth is clearly expressed in Chapter 3, verses 190-191 of the Quran, and it is reaffirmed in other parts of the Quran as well. Here are two verses that emphasize this idea:

“Did you not see how God sent down water from the sky with which We bring forth fruit of diverse colours. In the mountains there are streaks of various shades of white and red, and jet-black rocks; in like manner, men, beasts, and cattle have their diverse hues too. Only those of His servants, who possess knowledge, fear God. God is almighty and most forgiving.” (Quran 35:27-28)

In our time, many new and broader opportunities have arisen to understand divine rationalism. Modern scientific research has uncovered hidden aspects of nature, which can be seen as extensions of divine rationalism. The Quran had already hinted at these future discoveries. One verse from the Quran on this topic states:

“We shall show them Our signs in the universe and within themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this is the Truth.” (41:53)

There is a hadith narrated by Anas ibn Malik, in which the Prophet Muhammad said: “The example of my community

is like that of rain—you cannot tell whether its beginning is better or its end.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 12461) Rain initially brings many blessings. But later, as the earth is nourished, it begins to grow grass, trees, and crops. At that point, the blessings multiply. Now there are harvests, flowers, and fruits that become great benefits for people.

The same is true for Prophet Muhammad’s religion. When it first emerged, the world was still in its traditional era. Even then, followers of this faith gained many benefits. Later, as the world entered the scientific age, believers would once again receive significant advantages—this time through new opportunities. In this stage, the intellectual and spiritual greatness of Islam will re-establish itself in people’s minds in a renewed and powerful way. The Hadith’s prediction about a great blessing in the later part of the Muslim community likely refers to these scientific truths. These discoveries have opened the door to much broader opportunities—allowing people to attain higher levels of certainty and to demonstrate the truth of Islam to others with fresh and compelling evidence.

### **A Simple Example**

The takeaway from the hadith above can be rephrased as follows: human history is split into two main periods—one is the pre-scientific era, and the other is the post-scientific era. According to this division, people in the earlier period relied on traditional knowledge, while in the later period,

they started thinking based on scientific information.

According to the hadith, both periods have served as sources of spiritual nourishment for followers of the Prophet Muhammad. In the traditional era, they drew strength for their faith from old ways of understanding. Similarly, in the scientific age, they will continue to find intellectual material that reinforces their beliefs. To clarify this point, here is a simple example. The Quran often mentions blessings on Earth. One such verse is: “It is God who has given you the earth for a resting place.” (40:64) In earlier times, believers found faith-based insight in this verse. They felt deep gratitude to God, reflecting on how peaceful and stable the Earth is for them to live on. They understood that if the Earth were constantly shaking or unsteady, it would be extremely difficult to live a calm and settled life.

In the modern scientific age, new methods of study have shown that, contrary to earlier beliefs, the Earth is not still or motionless—it is constantly moving. New research reveals that the Earth is rotating in two ways at the same time: first, it revolves around the Sun in its orbit, and second, it spins around its own axis. This scientific discovery has made the meaning of the Quranic verse even more powerful. In light of new knowledge, the verse seems to say with even more emphasis: how kind and merciful is the One who made the Earth a place of peace for you—even though it is constantly moving in two different ways.

It is God who made the earth a stable home for you (in spite of the continuous double movement of the earth).

Based on the example of the Hadith, in the initial stage of the “rain,” a person would simply see the earth as a sign of God’s mercy—because it was a peaceful place to dwell. However, in the second stage of the “rain,” he should feel even more grateful to God. This is because, even though the earth is constantly moving in two different ways, God has still made it a place of peace and stability for him.

### **The Initial Explosion of the Universe**

Here is an example of divine reasoning. In chapter 21 of the Quran, a cosmic event is mentioned. The verse is translated as: “Do not those who deny the truth see that the heavens and the earth were joined together and that We then split them asunder? And that We have made every living thing out of water? Will they still not believe?” (21:30)

This verse uses the words *ratq* and *fatq*. *Ratq* refers to a combined or fused state, describing the original matter of the universe, which initially existed in a tightly unified form. *Fatq*, on the other hand, signifies the parting of these elements—an event in which an explosion occurred within this original mass, after which its components dispersed throughout the vast expanse of space. Following a long process, the present universe came into being. Earlier commentators of the Quran interpreted this verse based



on its straightforward, literal meaning. Even with its simple wording, the verse holds great spiritual value for believers. But in modern times, scientific research has uncovered details behind this general statement of the Quran—details that lead to certainty and deeper understanding. Modern astronomy tells us that about twenty billion years ago, there was a super-atom in space. Suddenly, it exploded. Its elements dispersed across the vast universe, eventually forming the structure of the universe we observe today. All celestial bodies—including our own Earth—originated from this event.

There are two kinds of explosions: one that is carefully planned and another that occurs spontaneously, without any planning. Experience shows a clear difference between these two types. Unplanned explosions only result in destruction. For example, when a bomb or a stockpile of explosives accidentally detonates, the outcome is always damage and ruin. The second type is a planned explosion, performed with a specific goal. For instance, blasting through rock in a mountain to build a tunnel. This kind of explosion produces useful and constructive results. As scientific research indicates, the universe started with an explosion—the Big Bang.

This event led to highly beneficial and meaningful outcomes. This clearly indicates that the explosion was intentional and carefully planned. A conscious Creator, following a specific blueprint, deliberately caused this explosion.

As a result, it produced exactly the outcomes that were intended in the plan. With this modern understanding, the verse in the Quran—“Do not those who deny the truth see that the heavens and the earth were joined together and that We then split them asunder?” (21:30)—becomes deeply meaningful.

This scientifically established beginning of the universe, even from a purely human perspective, proves that the universe has a Creator. He created it with a meaningful and well-thought-out plan. Once this truth is clear, it naturally follows that the creation of both human beings and the universe cannot be without purpose. As the Quran states elsewhere: “Lord, You have not created all this without purpose.” (3:191)

Despite this obvious truth, those who deny the meaning and purpose of the universe have no solid basis for their denial. Divine reflection (*Rabbani ta‘aqqul*) does not mean proving that every scientific concept is already mentioned in the Quran, or that all scientific knowledge has been directly taken from it. Such a belief reflects a misunderstanding of both Islam and science. In fact, this approach does not represent a sound interpretation of the Quran—it is merely an empty attempt to exploit the Quran to boost national or cultural pride. It holds little intellectual or spiritual value.

True divine reflection means this: when the Quran alludes to something, and modern scientific discoveries shed new

light on it, we are encouraged to understand those Quranic hints in the light of such discoveries.

This is exactly what is meant in the hadith: “Its wonders will never cease.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2906) In other words, the wonders of the Quran will never end. This hadith predicts that in the future, scientific discoveries will continue to reveal the deeper meanings of the Quran. In this way, the excellence of the Quran will continue to be revealed, right up to the Day of Judgment.

### **The Example of Pairs**

In the Quran, it is stated: “and We created pairs of all things so that you might reflect.” (51:49) This verse highlights an observable aspect of the world today, encouraging people to reflect and learn a lesson from it. The Quran refers to this phenomenon using the word “pairs” (*zaujain*). Commentators in earlier times have explained the term pairs in various ways. All these interpretations provide valuable insight. However, when we analyze this verse in light of modern scientific discoveries, it offers a renewed sense of certainty.

According to the Quran, it acts as a reason for strengthening one’s faith (48:4). Modern research has shown that the principle of pairing, which we observe in humans, also applies to everything in the universe. Nothing is complete on its own; it becomes complete only when combined with its pair.

In the material world, for example, atoms contain both negative and positive particles. In plants, the principle of pairing appears as male and female parts. One is called the staminate flower (male flower), and the other is the pistillate flower (female flower). The same pattern is observed in animals—each species exists in pairs: the male (he, male) and the female (she, female). Similarly, humans also come in pairs, known as man and woman.

If we consider this general principle of pairing, one exception stands out: the human world. Despite its activity and progress, it remains incomplete. To become whole, it needs a counterpart—a pair. However, this pair is absent in the current world. Experience shows that today's world is driven by self-interest. Most relationships are centered around personal gain. Yet, human beings naturally long for a principled and ideal world. Due to limited resources and individual freedom of choice, creating such a world here is impossible. This shortcoming suggests that the current world must have a pair that completes it. Since this world is based on self-interest, its counterpart must be a world founded on values. Only a value-based world can fill what is missing and bring completeness. That complete world is the Hereafter.

In the Hereafter, God has created Paradise—a world free from all imperfections and limitations. It is a world without fear or sorrow, where every condition necessary for complete fulfillment and eternal peace is present. In

this worldly life, everything exists in pairs—except for one thing—the pair of this world. This singular exception strongly suggests that its missing counterpart must exist, pointing toward a higher reality beyond this life. The pairs of everything else are visible in this world, but for the purpose of testing human beings, the pair of the human world has been kept in the unseen world. After death, all people will enter that next world—and there, they will find their missing pair in reality. The topic of divine reflection is a vast one, with many aspects. Here, only a few examples are shared to clarify the concept. The author has discussed other aspects of this subject in his other books, where further details can be found.

## CHOICE BEFORE PAKISTAN

When a river hits a mountain, it changes its course and keeps flowing. But a short-sighted person tries to cut through the mountain to make a path—even if it risks ending his journey forever.

In Pakistan's current situation, the real choice is not between democratic and military rule. The actual choice is between two options: either Pakistan finds a way out of the dead-end (impasse) where its progress has halted and begins to move forward again, or it remains stuck in that same dead-end—until it disappears from the global map of nations. Sometimes, in a nation's life, there comes a moment when its progress stops. At that point, a bold decision is needed so the country can restart its journey in a steady and balanced manner. These kinds of delicate decisions often go against public opinion. That's why such bold choices are usually made by people in military leadership.

A democratic leader cannot make such decisions because he comes to power through public votes. For this reason, it becomes nearly impossible for him to take any

revolutionary step that doesn't align with public sentiment. Here, I will present two examples of situations like this. One is from Muslim history, and the other is from Europe. In Muslim history, a well-known example is Salah ad-Din Yusuf (Joseph) ibn Ayyub (died 1193). He is widely praised for saving the Muslim world from the military invasions of the Crusaders. But how did Salahuddin gain the powerful leadership position that allowed him to play such a historic role? As is known, Salah ad-Din Ayyubi was a military officer under the Sultan of Egypt, *Nur al-Din Zengi* (1118-1174). After the Sultan's death, even though his sons were alive, Salahuddin seized control of the government and took on the role of Sultan.

Muslim historians generally see Salahuddin's takeover as justified. Although it might have appeared unconstitutional on the surface, it brought important political advantages. That move allowed Salahuddin to defend Islam and the Muslims in a strong way, which he later proved. The second example is Charles de Gaulle of France (died 1970). He was a general in the French army. Later, he took advantage of the situation and gained political power in France. Elected leaders, who come to power through public votes, cannot ignore public feelings when making bold decisions. But in some cases, saving a nation requires just that: a bold decision that opposes public opinion.

As is well known, France occupied several African countries, such as Algeria, and regarded them as

provinces of France. This unrealistic policy proved to be so damaging that, after World War II, France became the “sick man of Europe” in the race for development. De Gaulle set aside national passions and approached the issue with a clear mind. He realized that the only solution was to unilaterally grant independence to France’s African colonies. Although this move was completely against the emotions of the French people, it was this unpopular decision that enabled France to become a major power in the modern race for development.

Pakistan’s current situation remains dire. Its undeclared war against India over Kashmir has caused such extensive damage that the country is nearing collapse. The world views it as the most unsafe country. International financial institutions are hesitant to invest in Pakistan. Civil unrest among the Pakistani people has created a situation akin to a civil war. The country’s religious, educational, and cultural institutions have become hubs of destructive activity. The most painful consequence of these issues is what is called brain drain.

Humans naturally want to advance in the race for progress. That’s why, for a country to develop, it’s enough that people can clearly see open opportunities to act. For example, the country should have peace and a strong infrastructure. People should feel that they are getting the full reward for their efforts. If such opportunities truly exist in a country, every individual will naturally become active, and the country will start progressing on its own.



Unfortunately, this has not happened in Pakistan. The idea of “first change the current state of affairs (status quo)” has led to a constant state of emergency. As a result, practical opportunities for individuals to work according to their abilities have almost disappeared. Because of this, many motivated and talented people have left Pakistan. During my visits to the United States, I asked many Pakistanis living there why they left their home country. Almost all of them gave the same answer: in America, there are opportunities to work—while in Pakistan, there are none. Pakistan’s unrealistic policy on Kashmir has become a trap door, blocking the country’s progress. The fact is, Pakistan has fallen behind in today’s race for development. There is only one way to help the country catch up: instead of confronting problems directly, Pakistan should focus on maximizing available opportunities.

Given the current situation, Pakistani leaders should be willing to accept the existing state of affairs (status quo) in Kashmir. In other words, the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir should—after necessary adjustments—be recognized as the border between the two countries. The geographical and political status quo that has developed between Pakistan and India should be accepted, and the issue should be permanently resolved. Furthermore, such a bold and decisive step can only be taken by a non-democratic ruler.

It’s not possible for a democratic leader to make such a detached, unemotional decision. In my view, this historic

role is meant for a leader like President Pervez Musharraf. Those who question his right to hold power can find an answer in the example of former military president Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq. Earlier, General Zia-ul-Haq did the same thing—he seized control of Pakistan through a military coup and then declared himself President through a self-initiated process. At that time, everyone—from Pakistan’s religious groups to the U.S. State Department—accepted it, and it was justified under the “law of necessity.” That precedent is enough to justify accepting a military leader like President Pervez Musharraf in the same way. It is hypocritical when someone becomes practical where personal interest is involved but starts talking about ideals where personal interest is not at stake.

General Pervez Musharraf’s rise to power in Pakistan, and later taking the oath as president on June 20, 2001, may seem like an unconstitutional event. But in my view, it happened at exactly the right time. In the current situation, only a military leader like President Musharraf can make the bold decisions Pakistan needs. A democratic leader elected through the usual process would not be able to make such calm and rational decisions. The only solution to this problem is for Pakistan to move away from emotional policies and adopt a realistic approach.

Pakistan should reach an agreement with India on the Kashmir issue so that peace can be established in the country and national resources can be redirected toward

development. For the past 55 years, Pakistani politics has focused on one issue: trying to change the political status quo in Kashmir. It has now become clear that this policy is harmful. It has never produced positive results—neither in the past nor now—and it won't in the future either. Making such a bold and transformative decision is certainly difficult. But if Pakistan takes this step with courage, the results could be extraordinary.

The undeclared state of war with India would come to an end, replaced by peace. The negative attitude of the Pakistani people would shift to a positive one. Trade between the two nations would commence. There would be exchanges in education, culture, and tourism. Sharing literature would help reduce misunderstandings between the two countries, and a sense of brotherhood would develop.

India and Pakistan share a largely common language and culture. Yet, they remain distant neighbors. Afterwards, they would become close neighbors—as they truly are. The fact is, whenever a person or a nation wants to take action, there is always an existing situation shaped by earlier events. There are two ways of thinking in such circumstances. One is to first try to change the current situation so that action becomes possible. The other is to accept the current situation as it is and move forward in other possible areas. This second way, which I call positive status quoism, is the wiser path.

Every reasonable person agrees that when the ideal isn't

feasible, it's better to accept what's practical. This aligns with what Islam teaches. The Quran states: "Reconciliation is best" (4:128). In other words, in disputes, the most effective approach is to seek compromise—instead of engaging in conflict, choose peace.

The idea of accepting the status quo and building long-term relationships on that basis is not new. During Jawaharlal Nehru's time, both governments reportedly agreed to this proposal. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah even traveled to Pakistan as a mediator between the two sides. However, Nehru's sudden death prevented this historic plan from being carried out.

By 1956, Nehru had publicly proposed a settlement of Kashmir with Pakistan over the ceasefire line, now known as the LoC. On May 23, 1964, Nehru asked Sheikh Abdullah to meet Ayyub Khan in Rawalpindi in an attempt to resolve the Kashmir dispute. The Pakistani leader agreed to a summit with Nehru scheduled for June 1964. This message was urgently telegraphed to Nehru on May 26. However, just as Nehru's consent reached Karachi, news arrived that Nehru had died in his sleep. With that, a major opportunity for a peaceful resolution of Kashmir was also lost. (*Hindustan Times*, June 18, 2001)

If Pakistan accepts the current status of Kashmir as a permanent arrangement, neither Pakistan nor, more

broadly, the Muslim community would suffer any loss. Even if Kashmir remains separate from Pakistan, it will still be a Muslim-majority area. So, where is the real harm in that? Moreover, history shows that Muslims in the Indian subcontinent who stayed in India have progressed much more than those in Pakistan or Bangladesh. In fact, today, the wealthiest Muslim businessman—not only in the Indian subcontinent but in the entire Muslim world—is an Indian Muslim living in Bangalore.

Another point is that making peace with India is a significant challenge for Pakistan. It involves ending a long-standing conflict with a powerful neighbor. Resolving a dispute with one's neighbor paves the way for various kinds of progress. The example of modern Japan clearly shows how ending a rivalry can lead to development. Before World War II, Japan and the United States were enemies. After the war, Japan fully reconciled with the U.S. As a result, Japan became an economic superpower on the global stage.

Pakistan's current policy is harming the reputation of Islam. Due to this policy, Pakistan has used hostility toward India as a way to foster national unity. The result of this misguided approach is that the people of Pakistan—including those from what was once East Pakistan—were unable to unite under the banner of Islam, but they did become entirely united in their hostility toward India. This example has given the world reason to believe that Islam does not have the power to bring Muslims together. This

idea was reflected in an article published in the Hindustan Times, an English-language newspaper in Delhi, on June 18, 2001. It said: “Islam could not unite Pakistan, but enmity with India did.”

“Islam does not hold Pakistan together anymore,  
but anti-Indianism does.”

A reconciliatory policy by Pakistan could promote a new, positive attitude among its people. As a result, Pakistanis might enter a new era—one where their national unity is based not on anti-India sentiments but on a genuine pro-Islam stance. This change is so significant that it could open the floodgates of God’s mercy on Pakistan, leaving no door of His blessings closed.

## INSIGHT BORN OF FAITH

One of the qualities of the Prophet of Islam was his great vision, as a result of which he urged his followers to adopt a wise approach in all their dealings. A number of sayings on this subject have appeared in books of Hadith. For instance, he observed:

We must not feel envy except for two kinds of people: those who, when given wealth, spend generously in the path of Truth, and those who, when given wisdom, judge accordingly and shed its light upon others. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 73)

Abdullah ibn Abbas said that the Prophet of Islam embraced him and prayed to God to grant him wisdom. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3756)

A large number of traditions have been recorded which underscore the importance of wisdom. For instance, the Prophet of Islam said: How good is the gathering at which wise sayings are uttered. Similarly, he said: There is no better gift than words of wisdom. (*Sunan al-Darimi*, Hadith No. 295)

The importance of wisdom is so great that we are urged not to hesitate in accepting any words of wisdom, even from other nations or communities. The Prophet once observed:

“A piece of wisdom is a believer’s own lost possession, so wherever he finds it, he should adopt it as if he is the most deserving of it.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2687)

In some traditions wisdom and deeper understanding have even more importance attached to them than worship. As recorded by Al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah, “one learned religious scholar carries more weight than one thousand worshippers.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2681)

The Prophet’s entire life was filled with examples of wisdom. While discharging his responsibilities, he adopted the way of wisdom on all occasions and at all stages. Here are some examples from his life.

### **On the Occasion of Confrontations**

When the Prophet was thirty-five years old, before the time of his prophethood, a situation arose in *Makkah*, which called for tactful handling. The walls of the *Kabah*, which had collapsed for some reason, were being rebuilt by the *Quraysh* tribe, and in the process a problem arose as to who should be given the privilege of laying the black stone in its place in the *Kabah* wall. Since it was a matter of great prestige, everyone wanted this honour for himself.



The dispute on this question continued for several days without there being any amicable solution in sight. Finally, all the tribesmen concerned showed their willingness to accept a suggestion made by one of their senior members, viz., that the person who entered the Kabah the earliest the following morning would be appointed as their arbitrator. The next morning, when they all saw that the first person to enter the Kabah was the Prophet, they all chorused: "He is the trustworthy one (*Al-Ameen*). We shall all abide by his decision." (*Sirah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 1, p. 197)

The Prophet then asked the people to bring a sheet of cloth. When it was produced, he spread it on the ground and placed the black stone on it. Then he asked the people to hold the sheet by the edges and carry it to the wall of the Kabah. The Prophet then placed the black stone in the wall with his own hands.

This act of the Prophet serves as a fine example of how a controversial matter can be amicably solved, and to everyone's entire satisfaction, by having everyone participate. Such matters often turn into prestige issues. But if the matter is wisely handled and people are assured that they will not lose face, no difficulty will be faced in addressing the problem.

### **The Starting Point**

When the Prophet of Islam received prophethood in Makkah, he opted for a particular line of action in the

spreading of his message. He used to go to the people and tell them: “Say there is no God but the one God and you will be saved.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 16022) That is, abandon idolatry and worship only one God and you will earn salvation.

This shows the correct prophetic method of the Islamic movement. That is, first of all, to bring about a change in the character and thinking of the people through peaceful intellectual campaigns. Only when this initial work has been performed to a considerable extent should practical steps be taken and only if circumstances permit.

### **Tolerating Insult**

Ibn Ishaq, the Prophet’s earliest biographer, says that the Quraysh had given the Prophet the nomenclature of *Mudhammam* (the condemned one), then they used to heap abuses on him using this derogatory name. The Prophet said to his companions, “Don’t you wonder how God has saved me from the abuses of the Quraysh? They abuse and condemn a person named Mudhammam, while I am Muhammad.” (*Sirah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 1, p. 356)

During the Makkan period when the Quraysh developed enmity and hatred for the Prophet, they did not like calling him by his actual name, which was Muhammad, because it meant ‘praiseworthy.’ Therefore, to satisfy their inimical feelings, they named him Mudhammam,

meaning condemned. So, when the Quraysh abused and condemned him, they did not use the word Muhammad, but heaped abuses on one called Mudhammad. Even Abu Lahab's wife Umm Jamil herself came to the prophet and said: You are Mudhammad and we reject you (*Sirah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 1, p. 356)

This was undoubtedly an act of great provocation and calculated to cause humiliation. But the Prophet of Islam gave a simple, positive reply. He said that since they abused one they called Mudhammad, their abuses did not fall on him, as his name was Muhammad, not Mudhammad.

When the Prophet of Islam came to Madinah after migration, Abdullah ibn Ubayy, a tribal chief, became a dire opponent of the Prophet. He had accepted Islam, but out of jealousy he became his enemy. Defaming, disparaging and slandering the Prophet became his pastime. He was also responsible for the false propaganda against him. It would not be wrong to say that he was his greatest abuser (*shaatim*). Umar Faruq asked for the Prophet's permission to slay him, but the Prophet said; "Leave him alone, otherwise people will start saying that Muhammad kills his own people." (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 4905)

This incident tells us of an important example set by the Prophet, that is to bear humiliation, for if we failed to do so, greater evil would follow and that would result in discrediting God's religion.

## No Premature Action

After he received prophethood, the Prophet of Islam lived for thirteen years in Makkah where the majority of the Makkans opposed him, tormenting him in every possible way. Through his persistent efforts to convey the message of Islam, however, about two hundred men and women accepted the faith. These Muslims would say to the Prophet again and again that they wanted to engage in *jihad* against this oppression. But the Prophet always exhorted them to exercise patience. For instance, when Umar Farooq asked for the Prophet's permission to wage jihad against the oppression of the Quraysh, the latter replied: O Umar, we are small in number. (*Sirah Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 1, p. 441)

During the last days in Makkah about two hundred people in Madinah embraced Islam. When these people learned that the Prophet and his companions were being targeted for oppression, they too asked for the Prophet's permission to wage war against the oppressors, but the Prophet gave them the same reply:

Show patience, for I have not been given permission to do battle. (*Al-Mawahib al-Ladunniyyah* by Al-Qastallani, Vol. 1, p. 199)

Despite being subjected to all kinds of injustice and oppression for a period of fifteen years, the Prophet unilaterally adopted the path of patience and tolerance. Then for the first time, on the occasion of the battle of

Badr, the Prophet went out along with his companions to encounter the enemy. He took this step only when he had received God's clear promise that He would send His angels to the aid of His Messenger. (Quran, 8:9)

The way of the Prophet of Islam was not to retaliate immediately against any act of oppression. He felt that, despite injustice and oppression on the part of the enemy, the way of patience and avoidance of clashes should be adopted. Practical steps were to be taken only when it was certain that they would yield the desired result.

### **Avoiding Confrontation**

During the thirteen years' period in Makkah, the majority continued to oppose the Prophet, while only a small number of people supported him. When the Makkans found that mere opposition was not enough to extirpate his mission from Makkah, they resolved to remove him from their path by killing him. They unanimously decided that all the leaders of Makkah should attack him together and thus put an end to the movement of monotheism forever.

This was a very precarious situation. One apparent option was for the Prophet to confront them with the support of his Companions. However, he judged the matter by its likely outcome. Since in those circumstances armed confrontation was not going to yield the desired result, the Prophet followed the principle of avoidance and migrated to Madinah from Makkah.

The way of the Prophet of Islam was not to follow a collision course at a time of strife or controversy, but to move away from the point of conflict. Such a course enables one to conserve one's energies in order to utilize them more fruitfully at a later stage.

### **Concession to Others**

One of the enduring principles of Islam is what the Quran calls *ta'lif al-qulub*—winning people's hearts (9:60). It means bringing hearts together and creating a sense of affinity with others. This can be achieved only by showing consideration for people and respecting their feelings and interests. The principle of winning hearts is an important part of the Islamic message. It is universally relevant and remains necessary in every human society.

The Prophet of Islam followed this rule throughout his life. For instance, when he came to Madinah after emigration, many families of Jews and idolaters were settled there along with the believers. On reaching there the Prophet issued a statement known as the covenant of Madinah. In this the Prophet declared that each group would enjoy the freedom of their culture and religion; that the controversial matters of all tribes would be settled according to their respective tribal traditions; and that no coercion would be resorted to in matters of religion and culture.

The Prophet made special concessions to the Jews. He even went to the extent of fasting on the days when the Jews

fasted until it was held obligatory by a revelation to fast in the month of Ramazan. Moreover, the Prophet prayed in the direction of Jerusalem, the direction followed by the Jews, for a period of seventeen months, until God's command came to change the orientation towards the Kabah. By doing so, the Prophet aimed at fraternizing with the Jews, in order that they might be brought closer to his faith. (*Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, Vol. 2, p.150)

The way of the Prophet was not to return opposition for opposition. It was rather to make allowances in the face of opposition. His thinking was not to bring people into his fold by means of suppression. On the contrary, his way was to soften their hearts and bring them to his side through affection and kindness.

## Secrecy

We read in the annals of history that, prior to the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet gave instructions to his companions to ready themselves for a journey. The Muslims then engaged themselves in the necessary tasks. At that time, Abu Bakr came to his daughter, Aisha, wife of the Prophet. She too was busy making preparations for a journey. Abu Bakr asked her: "Has the Prophet ordered you to do so?" Aisha replied in the affirmative. Then Abu Bakr asked her about the destination of this proposed journey. Aisha replied, "By God, I don't know." (*Sirah ibn Hisham*, Vol. 2, p. 397)

One of the sunnah of the Prophet of Islam was that, in delicate matters, he always observed strict secrecy. And this is what he did during the campaign of the conquest of Makkah. He left Madinah for Makkah along with ten thousand of his companions, without confiding in them where he was heading. The companions are on record as saying that it was only when they reached the point from where the path led directly to Makkah, that they realized what their ultimate destination would be.

In matters of strategy, the observance of secrecy is of the utmost importance. Success, in most cases, depends on the fact that the rival party remains completely unaware of one's plans in advance. The Prophet of Islam showed this wisdom all his life.

### **Accepting the Status Quo**

Whenever a controversy arises between two people or two groups, a practical working arrangement ultimately becomes established. An attempt to change this status quo in most cases results in futility or in all-out strife. What normally happens is that the status quo continues. If not, mutual retaliation results in further losses. In this pointless engagement, precious opportunities are also wasted.

In such a controversial matter, the Prophet's sunnah is to accept the status quo. The great benefit of this status-quoism is that it gives one the respite to consolidate one's energies. By removing oneself from the scene of



controversy, one may strengthen oneself so greatly that a time will come when ultimately the balance of power will change without any major confrontation.

The Prophet of Islam adopted this wise course on the occasion of the drawing up of the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah. When the Makkans heard that their opponents had gathered at Hudaibiyyah, they too reached there to stop the Muslims from going any further. The Prophet at this juncture was on his way to Makkah to perform the rite of Umrah (minor pilgrimage). Thus, a situation of deadlock came to be created at *Hudaibiyyah*. The Prophet did not resort to breaking this deadlock in order to move ahead. Instead, he withdrew and returned to Madinah after signing the Hudaibiyyah Peace Treaty on terms dictated entirely by the Quraysh.

It amounted to accepting the status quo already established between the Prophet and the other party. This wisdom gave the Prophet an opportunity for further consolidation, which became a reality within a period of a mere two years. It was at that stage that the Prophet's victorious and peaceful entry into Makkah became a possibility.

### **Ease in difficulty**

The Prophet of Islam conquered Makkah in 8 A.H. Then he set off from Makkah for Taif, along with his companions. In those days there were no well-laid roads in and around Makkah, and on the journey, they had to walk along a narrow path, which lay between two hills.

When the Prophet of Islam reached that point, he asked his companions what its name was. They replied that it was called *Azzaiqa*, meaning the “narrow path.” The Prophet said:

No it is rather a broad path. (*Sirah ibn Hisham*, Vol. 2, p. 282)

On this journey the Prophet was accompanied by ten thousand of his companions. If they had attempted to go along this path walking several abreast, it would certainly have been difficult to do so, due to its narrowness. But because they went along it in single file, despite its being narrow, it was easy to do so. It was this practical wisdom, which the Prophet pointed to in his reply. We find an important secret of life in this incident: the necessity to adapt our strategy to the circumstances. This practice relates to all matters in life. By our being adaptable all life's difficulties maybe resolved.

### **Strategic Retreat**

During the life of the Prophet, in 8 A.H. the battle of Muta took place on the border of Syria, which at that time was under Byzantine rule. The Muslim army, totalling only three thousand, was greatly outnumbered by the enemy forces. Many commanders from the Muslim side fell in the battle. In the last stage Khalid bin Walid, having great military experience, reorganized the Muslim ranks in such a way as to give the impression that massive reinforcements

from Madinah had arrived to join the battle. Awed at this, the Romans decided to abandon the battlefield. Finding it pointless to continue the battle, Khalid decided to withdraw, on the principle of tactical retreat, and left for Madinah.

The brave Arabs, always ready to fight to the finish, saw the retreat as a dishonour to them. They failed to understand the wisdom of tactical retreat and accused the Muslims of fleeing in the face of the enemy. They called them O Furrar, that is, those who take flight. When the Prophet heard this, he corrected this wrong impression by telling them that those people had not fled but had simply withdrawn in order to advance again at some future date, God willing. (*Sirah ibn Hisham*, Vol. 3, p. 438)

This saying of the Prophet teaches us that the right step is that which is result-oriented. Fighting to die for honour and prestige is not a desirable act in Islam. If the enemy's numbers are so great as to turn the tide of battle in their favour, hostilities should not be engaged in. Even if a confrontation does take place, tactical retreat should be resorted to, so that preparations may be made for taking the next result-oriented steps.

### **The Policy of Gradualness in Reform**

Aisha, the Prophet's wife, has been recorded as saying that "the first chapters of the Quran to be revealed, those making mention of heaven and hell, were short ones. It was only when people became conditioned to accept

Islamic teachings that verses dealing with what is lawful and unlawful began to be revealed. And if injunctions like: ‘Do not drink wine,’ and ‘Do not commit adultery,’ had been revealed first, people would have refused to abandon these practices.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 4993)

This tradition tells us of a very important policy of the Prophet. It is the same practical wisdom, which is called gradualness. The reform of human beings is a very difficult and complex task. Generally, because they have become accustomed to certain ideas and habits, they hold them to be right and proper. That is why they do not readily accept anything new. In such a situation the only way to reform people is to follow the path of wisdom and do everything gradually.

The Prophet of Islam first of all changed the thinking of the people in Arabia. And only when they had developed the ability to accept reforms, did he introduce the commands of the *Shariah* to them. If the Prophet had attempted to impose the laws of *Shariah* upon them without striving for their intellectual purification—this being against human nature—his efforts towards revolution in Arab society could never have been crowned with success.

### **Making Concessions as the Situation Requires**

In Dhul Hijjah 9 A.H., the Prophet of Islam performed the Hajj, which is generally known as the Farewell Pilgrimage. More than one hundred thousand Muslims had gathered

to perform the Hajj with the Prophet. Of the many observations made by the Prophet in his sermon, there was one very significant one, which amounts to a declaration of human equality. On this occasion the Prophet uttered these historic words: that no Arab had any superiority over a non-Arab; no white enjoyed any superiority over a black, for superiority is related solely to one's religiosity and God-consciousness (*taqwa*).

About two and a half months after delivering this sermon, the Prophet passed away. The problem that arose after his death concerned the choice of his successor. According to the declaration made in the sermon, what should have been done was to decide upon a successor to the caliphate on the basis of piety and God-consciousness (*taqwa*), rather than on the basis of family and tribe. But this did not happen.

After his death Muslims gathered at a meeting place in Madinah known as Thaqifa bani Saida. The majority were of the opinion that Saad ibn Ubada, who belonged to a Madinan tribe, should be selected as the successor to the Prophet. On this occasion Abu Bakr conveyed the Prophet's dictum:

“The leaders will be from the Quraysh.” (*Kitab al-Riddah* by Al-Waqidi, Vol. 1, p. 41)

That is, the Caliph or Imam—the head of the Muslim state—should be selected from the tribe of the Quraysh. This meant that Saad ibn abi Ubadah, not being a member

of that tribe, could not be chosen as caliph. After some deliberation, this issue was finally resolved by deciding that only a member of the Quraysh tribe should be appointed as the Prophet's successor. Accordingly, Abu Bakr, who belonged to the Quraysh tribe, was appointed as first caliph.

There was an apparent contradiction in this. Why should the Prophet ever have made such an observation? There was, however, great wisdom behind it. That is, the caliph, or the ruler, having to impose commands on a vast society, required of necessity, that people should be willing to submit to or obey him. Without such obedience, the Caliphate could not have functioned effectively in that particular historical context.

In ancient Arabia over the centuries, the Quraysh had come to acquire the position of leadership, so that the public readily accepted the leadership of a person who belonged to this tribe. That was why the Prophet indicated his preference for a member of the Quraysh as his successor. This was not a command of an eternal nature. This meant only that in any community or nation it should be a member of a group, which enjoyed a political status such as that of the Quraysh, who should be appointed as its ruler.

This shows that pragmatism was also one of the sunnah of the Prophet. In individual matters, one should always keep before one what is ideal, but at the same time bear

in mind that in social matters sometimes the ideal is not practicable. It is necessary, therefore, that in such matters the ideal be abandoned in favour of practical solutions. If this principle were not observed, the smooth functioning of any given system would not at times be possible.

### **Future Vision**

After the victory of Makkah came the Year of Delegations, when Arabian tribes thronged to Madinah to embrace Islam—among them, the tribe of Thaqif from Taif. It set a strong precedent for entering the fold of Islam. They said, however, that although they wanted to accept Islam, they would neither pay *zakat* nor perform *jihad*.

It was a serious matter. The Muslims were not willing to accept conditions of this kind. Rising above the present, the Prophet of Islam looked at the future. His deep insight showed that once those people became a part of Muslim society after having embraced Islam, they would surely accept everything on their own, as required by Islam. Therefore, the Prophet accepted their conditions and allowed them to enter his fold. To remove the doubts of his companions, the Prophet said:

Once they accept Islam, they will pay *zakat* and perform *jihad* as well. (*Sunan Abu Dawood*, Hadith No. 3025)

This example set by the Prophet is illustrative of his

great wisdom. This was seeing into the future. Humans are not made of stones. They are open to influence. Man is a creature who keeps changing. His future is different from his present. This reality must always be kept in view while dealing with him. Insisting on instant change produces haughtiness. Whereas, if an attitude of broad-mindedness is adopted, the potential follower will of his own become in future what we wanted to see him turn into in the present.





THE ART OF  
CLEAR  
THINKING

## THE ART OF CLEAR THINKING

Thinking, one could say, is man's greatest action. Right thinking is actually a form of worship. After his death, someone asked the wife of Abu Darda, a Companion of the Prophet, what his greatest deed had been. She replied, "Thinking and drawing lessons." (*Kitab al-Zuhd wa al-Raqa'iq* by Ibn al-Mubarak, Hadith No. 286) Likewise, after the death of another Companion of the Prophet, Abu Dharr, someone asked his widow what his special worship had been, and she replied, "The whole day, he would keep thinking." (*Hilyat al-Awliya*, Vol. 1, p. 164)

The action of thinking happens at the level of the mind. And it is the mind that is the biggest part of human existence. Thinking is the means for one's intellectual development. It is through thinking that all great discoveries have been made. Thinking lifts a person from the animalistic level to the higher stage of humanity. It is through thinking that one understands the difference between one thing and another; one discovers solutions to difficulties; one discerns hidden realities. Through thinking, one learns how to convert

minus points into plus points. Thinking makes one capable of effectively planning one's actions, which is key to success.

The ability to think is a quality that all human beings possess by birth itself. But only that person possesses right thinking who makes himself properly prepared for it at the conscious level. For right thinking, it is necessary for a person to have the courage to think by rising above his personal likes and dislikes. He should see things realistically just as they are, not as he would like to see them. He should be free from biased thinking. No matter what the prevailing conditions might be, he should be ready to accept the results of proper thinking, be they in his favour or against him. This is the beginning of right and clear thinking.

## **Knowledge without Realisation**

The Quran says: "Be mindful of God; He teaches you" (2:282). In this verse, *ilm* means understanding. The meaning of this is that God-consciousness (*taqwa*) in a person will engender in him a proper understanding of the religion (*At-Tafseer al-Qurtubi*, Vol. 3, p. 406). From this, we learn that it is possible for a person to possess knowledge or information about religion and yet not possess a proper understanding of religion. This is because the source of true understanding of religion is God-consciousness, not mere knowledge. There is a supplication in a hadith report as follows: "O God, I seek refuge with You from the knowledge that is of no benefit." (*Sunan an-Nasa'i*, Hadith No. 5470)

To understand this point, consider an example. In present times, some emotionally driven Muslims have unleashed violence at different places wrongly in the name of *jihad*, for which they have had to face one-sided devastation. And now, in line with a defeatist mentality, some of them are even resorting to suicide bombing. They strap bombs around their bodies and enter the areas of their supposed enemies and, exploding the bombs, knowingly kill themselves and others too. This is clearly a case of suicide, and suicide has been declared to be *haraam* (forbidden) in Islam. However, some Muslim scholars, giving this the name of *istishhaad* (desire for martyrdom), have declared it *ja'iz* (permissible). In this regard, they seek to back their claim by drawing on some incidents in the age of the Prophet's Companions. For instance, these people cite an incident from the time of the Caliphate of the first Caliph, Abu Bakr Siddiq (d. 634 C.E.), and wrongly claim that it is proof in support of their ideology. This incident is about a Companion of the Prophet named Al-Bara ibn Malik (d. 20 A.H.), which took place during the battle against *Musaylimah*, the false claimant to Prophethood (d. 632 C.E.).

In the period of the Caliphate of Abu Bakr Siddiq, a battle took place between the Muslims, led by Hazrat Khalid, and *Musaylimah* and his supporters from among the people of *Yamama*. In the last stage of this battle, a group of rebels entered a walled garden and shut its sturdy door from the inside. At that time, Al-Bara ibn Malik was among the

Companions of the Prophet who were engaged in fighting the rebels. He was famous for his bravery. He told some of the Companions of the Prophet to make him sit on a shield and to lift up the shield with the help of spears and get him to the top of the wall of the garden. Once he got to the top of the wall, he leapt over and entered into the garden. The rebels who were inside attacked him, but he fought them. Managing to get to the door of the garden, he opened it. As soon as the door was opened, a group of the Prophet's Companions entered. Fighting the rebels, they overpowered them.

Now, this step of Al-Bara's was an act of great risk. It contained a threat to his life. But the rebels could not succeed in killing him and he was able to come out alive. In fact, after this incident, he lived for another eight years and died a natural death, in the year 20 A.H. (*Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, Vol. 2, p. 218; *Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya*, Vol. 9, p. 469-70; *Al-A'lam by al-Zirikli*, Vol. 2, p. 47)

There is a big difference between the act of Al-Bara and modern-day Muslim suicide bombers. Putting himself in danger, Al-Bara took a step that had two possible outcomes—either he would come out alive, or he would be killed. In contrast to this, the step that suicide bombers take has only one possible outcome—their own death. They strap bombs to their bodies and detonate them. The outcome of this action is dependent on their own death. This is a clear issue of knowingly and deliberately

committing suicide. There is, thus, a clear difference in the nature of the two actions.

But on account of not knowing this difference, some people wrongly assume both actions to be identical in nature, and so an action that was clearly an act of suicide was wrongly accorded by them the status of '*martyrdom*.'

This is an example of knowledge without realisation or *maarifah*. If a person possesses knowledge (in the sense of information) but does not possess the insight of *maarifah*, he will not understand the difference between one thing and another. What he speaks will be based simply on the information that he possesses. But in actual fact, it will be based on ignorance, and nothing else.

For *maarifah*, knowledge is necessary, but a person of *maarifah* is able to go beyond external knowledge to see inner realities. He is able to properly analyse information. He can read between the lines. He can see events in their proper perspective. These are some of the attributes of a person of *maarifah*. Only for a person of *maarifah* can his knowledge become beneficial. Without *maarifah*, knowledge is an enormous depravity.

### **Difference of Perspective**

In the year 625 C.E., at the time of the Prophet Muhammad, a battle occurred which is called the Battle of Uhud. In this battle, initially, the Muslims scored a victory. But later,

their victory turned into defeat. The Quran commented on this issue in this way:

And God made good His promise to you when by His leave you were about to destroy your foes, but then your courage failed you and you disagreed among yourselves [concerning the Prophet's direction] and disobeyed it, after He had brought you within sight of what you wished for, some of you desired the goods of this world and some of you desired the Hereafter, then in order that He might put you to the test, He prevented you from defeating your foes. But now He has pardoned you: God is most gracious to the believers. (3:152)

In this battle, the Muslims were defeated. Many of them were seriously wounded. Moreover, the battle had occurred entirely because of the excesses of their opponents. It was a completely one-sided attack on the part of the latter. For this battle, the fault lay with them, not with the Muslims. But despite this, why was it that here, the Quran, instead of criticising the opposing party, only indicated the weaknesses of the Muslims? Why was this style adopted?

The reason for this was the difference in the way of thinking. In cases like this, one method is to engage in logical analysis. And so, one can analyse, what in the light of logical analysis, is right and what is wrong, and who the oppressor is and who the oppressed is. This method



appears, on the face of it, to be a just one. But in actual fact, it is of no use. In such cases, what is of actual importance is not expressing what is logically just, but, rather, searching for practical measures for solving a problem. Making up for the loss caused in such cases can only happen through taking practical measures, and not through logical analysis.

The Quran has adopted this very same practical method in commenting on the Battle of Uhud. In the court of the Hereafter, oppressors will certainly be told about their oppression and will receive punishment for it. But in this present world, in such cases what needs to be done is to find out a practical solution so that, through it, one's defeat can be transformed into a victory.

## **Dichotomous Thinking**

There is a certain way of thinking that can be called 'dichotomous thinking.' Dichotomous thinking is thinking in terms of rigid compartments of black and white. This way of thinking often becomes the cause of much harm and damage. A person who thinks in this way sees things in rigidly dualistic terms. It is as if there are only two options before him—black, or white. He is unaware that there is actually a third option available as well. On account of his unawareness of this third option, he is not able to avail of it even though it may be that his success actually lies hidden in it.

Consider the following case: Members of a certain

community take out a procession. Raising slogans, the procession enters a locality that is inhabited by members of another community. Thinking the slogans to be directed against them, the people of this locality get agitated. As a result, there is a clash between the members of the two communities, which ends in enormous loss of life and property.

Reflect carefully on this example. Because of their particular way of thinking, the inhabitants of the locality through which the procession passed, see the matter in such a way that only two options seem plausible to them: either to tolerate the objectionable slogans or else to try to stop the processionists from raising the slogans. They think that tolerating the slogans would be tantamount to cowardice and accepting dishonour while trying to stop the processionists from raising the slogans seems to them an act of bravery. And so, they decide to take action to try to stop the sloganeering in order to attain their desired objective. But the result, in actual practice, of their not being willing to tolerate the sloganeering turns out to be that they have to tolerate bloody rioting instead, in which they suffer immense loss.

The cause for this devastating outcome is dichotomous thinking. Had the inhabitants of the locality been aware that there exists also a third option that is possible for them to avail of, they might have saved themselves from having to face the terrible loss caused by the rioting. This third option

for them would be to simply ignore the sloganeering. Had the inhabitants of the locality availed of this third option and simply ignored the sloganeering, within five minutes or so they would have found that the procession had moved ahead in its path and that the provocative slogans had vanished into thin air as if they had never existed.

### **Sign of Wisdom**

A British writer, William Ralph Inge (1860-1954), rightly remarked, 'The wise man is he who knows the relative value of things.'

One form of knowing the 'relative value of things' is that a person knows the possible results of his actions. If unawareness of the possible results of one's actions is evidence of foolishness, awareness of the possible results of one's actions is wisdom.

Once, it so happened that a person's friend cheated him out of a large sum of money. This person had now a burning desire for revenge, so much so that he wanted to kill his former friend.

This man happened to meet me. I said to him that before taking revenge, he should think of the consequences of such an action: Revenge would be taken for revenge. If he killed his former friend, then the man's sons might kill him. In this way, a chain of enmity and revenge would begin between the two families. I said to the man that

one mistake of his had given an opportunity to his former friend to cheat him. The right thing now for him to do was to accept this mistake and to reform himself for the future.

To take revenge is to turn one's 'first mistake,' as it were, into a chain of continuous destruction. On the other hand, to not take revenge is to nip one's mistake in the bud. A foolish person knows only his actions, while a wise man knows not only his actions but also their possible consequences.

## **Second Chance**

A certain man was a manager in a company. He had a dispute with the company's owner. The dispute kept mounting. It caused the manager grave mental stress and tension, so much so that he began contemplating suicide. Instead of trying to end the problem, he decided to end his own life, in the hope of thereby saving himself from the problem.

This man happened to meet me. I asked him why he wanted to commit suicide. The doors of life were open to him, so, what was the need to choose the door of death? I said that he had ostensibly lost only his 'first chance.' A 'second chance' was still available for him. I then suggested that he shift to some other city. On the basis of his abilities, he could get good opportunities elsewhere. After advising him thus, I penned these words in his diary: 'Sometimes, a gardener plucks a plant in his garden from its place only so that he can plant it in some other, better place.'

The man accepted my advice, and, resigning from the company where he worked, went off to another city. There, he became engaged in business, and, compared to before, he was now in a far better position economically than before.

In every person's life, a time comes when he experiences some sort of loss. People who consider a loss to be just a loss can, through new efforts, make themselves successful once again. On the other hand, people who consider loss to be permanent failure lose their courage and give up. They lack the will and determination to engage in any new action. Which of these two courses of action a person will adopt depends on his thinking. It is his way of thinking that makes a person fail or leads one towards success.

### **Difficult Becomes Easy**

Along with more than 10,000 of his Companions, the Prophet Muhammad was proceeding from Makkah to Taif. On the way, they came to a mountainous path that did not seem wide enough for them to move on. The Prophet asked the people how the path was. Based only on the external appearance of the path, they said that it was a narrow path. It seemed as if this *caravan* of more than 10,000 people would not be able to move on the path. The Prophet said it is the easy path. (*Sirah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 2, p. 482) He explained that the road would definitely be narrow for them because they wanted to pass through the path all

together, at the same time. He suggested that they stand one behind another in a vertical line. The people did as he suggested and were then able to move along the path easily. The path that had appeared narrow to them as a group now became wide when they took the form of a line.

This incident illustrates the difference that one's way of thinking can make. In this world, everything depends on thinking. Wrong thinking makes an easy thing difficult, while right thinking makes a difficult thing easy. This issue of difference in thinking applies to all matters, big or small. It applies to domestic affairs as well as to national and international affairs.

### **Harm Caused by Wrong Thinking**

In 1930, the annual session of the All-India Muslim League was held in the town of Allahabad. It was presided over by Allama Iqbal. In his Presidential address, he made the claim that in undivided India, Muslims would not be able to keep their identity protected and that, therefore, when India becomes independent, in the Muslim-majority areas of the country Muslims should have a separate homeland. This suggestion later became popular among many Muslims under the name of 'Pakistan,' and in 1947, a country separate from India came into existence with that name. This concept of a separate Muslim territory was accepted by many other Muslim thinkers too. And, based

on this same sort of thinking, several movements came into being in different parts of the world. The agenda of these movements can be described in one word: ‘Pakistanisation.’

Following such anachronistic thinking, in those countries that had territories on their frontiers with Muslim-majority, such a movement, as can be called ‘Pakistanisation’, emerged with full zeal. In all such places, Muslim leaders emerged who, through their emotionally driven movements and fiery rhetoric, fomented emotional politics among Muslims based on separatism. The cases of Myanmar, the Philippines, Ethiopia, parts of China, and the former Yugoslavia can be cited in this regard.

These regional Muslim leaders were enthusiastically driven to the point of madness in their imaginary ideology of ‘Pakistanisation.’ And so, they did not keep their divisive political movements limited to peaceful methods of action. Rather, they led them on to bloody armed struggles. These violent movements of ‘Pakistanisation’ met with complete failure. They resulted in further exacerbation of the problems of the Muslims themselves.

Why did this destructive policy of ‘Pakistanisation’ become popular in so many parts of the Muslim world? The reason was the anachronistic thinking of the Muslim leaders of the times. They could not understand and appreciate the new changes that had come about in modern times. The whole world had become one and was entering the age of globalization, but at this very time, Muslim leaders, because

of their lack of awareness of the age, were spearheading contrarian movements in the form of 'Pakistanisation.' These movements were synonymous with banging their heads against the massive boulder of the age, as it were. That is why these movements met with such negative outcomes as were fated for them from day one.

The changes that accompanied the modern age greatly increased the importance of mutual interaction between people from different religious backgrounds and communities. But Muslim leaders, with extreme foolishness, were spearheading their movements in complete opposition to this. Historical experience has conclusively proven that challenge and competition are indispensable means of progress. But these Muslim leaders, fired with misplaced zeal, were busy trying to construct a fanciful world for Muslims where they would supposedly face no challenges, nor any competition. From the immense opportunities for progress that modern developments had made available, it had clearly come to be seen that only through large-scale joint efforts among people from different religious and other backgrounds could big achievements be possible. But these Muslim leaders had come to imagine that it was their political task to construct imaginary political islands, as it were, for Muslims, where they would be devoid of the impact of inter-community interaction and cooperation. Modern communications have rendered the concept of geographical separation of



peoples completely unnecessary. But these Muslim leaders, unaware of these changes, ridiculously wasted their time and resources on their useless movements. The modern age opened up a great opportunity in the form of freedom and also of democracy, which was based on the principle of power-sharing among members of the public, rather than the rule of a single individual. But these Muslim leaders neither understood the possibilities that these had made available nor succeeded in using them.

Modern changes had opened up another possibility, which can be called 'The Age of Institutions'. In contrast to the Age of Monarchy, governance had now narrowed down within the restricted political boundaries of administration. Other than this, many new fields (for instance, in the areas of education, economy, and the mass media) had come into being in which individuals and groups could, by establishing institutions, obtain greater distinction than through exercising political power. However, these Muslim leaders were not aware of these modern possibilities. That being the case, how could they avail of them?

### **Lesser Evil**

There is a saying of the second Muslim Caliph, Umar Farooq: 'Intelligence is not who knows good from evil, but intelligence is one who knows the lesser of two evils' (*Al- 'Iqd al-Farid*, Vol. 2, p. 109-10). From this saying, one learns that if a person possesses theoretical knowledge of

things that are good and things that are bad or evil, he may be a scholar, but he cannot be said to be a wise person. In order to be a wise person, one must possess an additional quality, and that is knowledge of which of two evils is a lesser evil and less destructive.

To understand this issue, consider a hypothetical situation. Suppose a group of people are raising objectionable slogans outside your house. In this case, one evil is this sloganeering of theirs. Another possible, evil is that if you try to stop them or enter into an argument with them, they might get more aggressive and might even resort to violence and cause loss of life and property. Now, a wise person is one who, thinking with a cool mind, understands which of these two evils is the bigger one and which is the smaller one. Following this, he agrees to tolerate the smaller evil so that he does not have to face the bigger evil.

In their affairs, ordinary people know only two things—the aspect of good and the aspect of evil. But the wise person is he who can also distinguish between the two types of evil, and then agree to tolerate the lesser evil so that he can be saved from a bigger evil.

### **The Strength of Forbearance**

Two men lived in the same city. It so happened that their relations became strained. One day, they happened to meet on a street. On seeing Mr. B, Mr. F burst out. He heaped all the harsh words that he had in his vocabulary on him.

But Mr. B silently listened to him. When after going on for a long time Mr. F fell silent, Mr. B, without reacting at all, politely said to him, 'I think you are tired. Come, let us go to a restaurant and have some tea.' After this, the two men went to a nearby tea stall. Sipping his tea, Mr. F's anger subsided. Finally, he requested Mr. B for forgiveness and promised that he would never again behave with him as he had just done.

Whenever a person says something provocative, what generally happens is that the person he directs his words at becomes enraged. He tries to reply to him through counter-aggression or anger. But this method is synonymous with trying to douse the flames of a fire with the fire itself. The right method to put out a fire is to use water. Likewise, one should try to respond to anger through self-restraint, tolerance, or forbearance. Forbearance is not just an ethical quality. More than that, it is a powerful plan of action. If a person gets angry in response to a provocation, he loses his biggest ability—i.e., intellect (*aqal*). In such a situation, he is not capable of using his intellect to understand the matter in depth and to defend himself in a more efficacious manner. An enraged person can only display a negative reaction. In contrast, a person who, despite being shown anger by someone else, does not get angry, can respond positively to the situation at hand. Needless to say, this is a much more effective response.

## Peace of Mind

Perhaps the biggest problem in present times is that today, maybe not a single person enjoys peace of mind. Almost every person, rich or poor, has become prey to mental tension. I once learned of a computer engineer who all of a sudden received a sum of 750 million dollars from America for an invention. But this huge amount of money led to enormous mental stress for him, so much so that in a period of just a year, he lost his sleep and began consuming sleeping pills. The condition of a vast section of people, both 'big' and 'small,' in the world today is something like this.

Generally, two sorts of solutions are offered for this problem of mental stress and tension. The first is the recommendation that one should try to earn as much money as possible so that one can obtain as many items of convenience, comfort, and luxury as possible. However, experience clearly shows the inadequacy of this approach. Many people accumulated a huge amount of material wealth during their lifetime but, despite this, remained devoid of satisfaction and tranquility until they finally departed from this world in that same state.

The fact is that by nature, man is a perfectionist, while the present world is, in every sense, imperfect. This situation creates a contradiction between man and the present world. It is as a result of this contradiction that despite obtaining all sorts of worldly 'goods' a person does not enjoy contentment. Everything in the world appears to

him as lower than the yardstick that he has established. This is why even after obtaining all sorts of material 'goods' he is not content. Even when he is surrounded by material luxuries, he remains sunk in a sort of unconscious discontentment. This fact proves that to search for peace of mind in material 'goods' and worldly luxuries is useless and that it will never be achieved.

A second suggestion that is often offered for the problem of mental stress and tension, is a sort of 'meditation' that seeks to stop a person's process of thinking so that he is not capable of feeling stress consciously. However, this approach is synonymous with mental anesthesia. It seeks to benumb or blunt a person's capacity for thinking and make him insensitive. Even if this sort of peace of mind is attained, it is definitely not something desirable because a process that suppresses the thinking faculty of a person is like putting him into an intellectual coma.

This method is against the system according to which human nature works. The greatest thing that Nature has given man is his mind. According to Nature's plan, the presence of problems is not something bad for the mind. In fact, it is a blessing in disguise. For man's intellectual development, Nature has established a method of shock treatment. This being the case, to put an end to the process of shock treatment is to shut the doors of a person's intellectual development. In this way, this method is against the system of Nature. And, needless to say, something that

is against the system of Nature is something that is worthy of being rejected.

The fact of the matter is that the solution to the problem of mental tension is not to put an end to mental tension, but, rather, to manage it. This means engaging in intellectual planning such as renders mental tension so ineffective that while a person may continue to face it, it does not disturb his peace of mind.

To understand this issue, consider an example. A young, 30-year-old, man was the manager of a multinational company. There, he earned a sizeable salary, plus perks. But because the company where he worked followed the hire-and-fire principle, he was constantly afflicted with mental tension. The fear of losing his job always troubled him, as a result of which he had no peace. One day, I said to him that I would give him a formula. If he abided by it, his peace of mind would not get disturbed. The formula was expressed in these words: 'A person can take away your job. But no one has the power to take away your destiny.'

The man abided by this formula. After some days, we met again. He said that he had obtained peace of mind, that he now slept contentedly, and that he spent his daytime also with contentment.

Every person can defuse mental tension by managing it in a similar way. Despite facing challenges, they can lead a life characterised by peace of mind. The fact is that the human

mind is a treasure trove of a vast number of abilities. There is just one cause for all mental tension—and that is, not being able to use one's mental abilities in full. Likewise, the solution to all mental tension too is just one, and that is, to use one's mental abilities suitably.

Consider the following example: There was once a trader in a big city. It so happened that he invested a huge sum of money and developed a certain product. When the product was ready, all of a sudden, the demand for it in the market disappeared. The man was compelled to store the items in a warehouse. The incident had such an impact on him that he fell ill. His blood pressure shot up. He lost his sleep at night. He became a victim of spasms and convulsions.

When I met the man, I explained to him that he was viewing the issue only in terms of the present. I suggested that he change this thinking of his and start thinking of the issue in terms of the future instead. He should place the issue in the wait-and-watch box, as it were. The man took my suggestion. Later, after two years or so, I received a letter in which he joyfully wrote that all the goods that he had produced had been sold off, and at a profit.

The fact of the matter is that everything depends on one's way of thinking. Our minds become of a certain sort and begin to work in a certain way depending on the way we think. This being the case, if we change our way of thinking, sorrow can be transformed into happiness, despondency into trust, and helplessness into courage.

## Protection of Purpose

The Quran says: ‘We have appointed for every community ways of worship to observe. Let them not dispute with you on this matter. Call them to the path of your Lord—for surely, you are rightly guided’ (22:67).

‘Let them not dispute with you’ in the above verse means that one should not give them any reason for disputing. The price for putting up with a dispute with an opponent will be that the purpose of inviting them to God will be affected. The benefit of avoiding a dispute is that the issue of inviting them to God will remain central to one’s relationship with them. It is to the benefit of the one who invites others to God that this issue alone remains at the top of their dialogue. Through unilateral avoidance of conflict, they must try to ensure this.

Consider the following example of Maulana Muhammad Ilyas (d. 1944), founder of the *Tablighi Jamaat* movement. In the initial days of the movement, he went to an area called Mewat (a region in northern India, where the movement began). He saw a villager standing at the edge of his field. The Maulana asked him to recite the *kalima* (the Islamic creed). This man was not familiar with this sort of thing. He got angry and pushed the Maulana, who fell to the ground. After this, the Maulana silently got up and then, without any complaint, said to him that he would recite the *kalima* and that the man could repeat it.



This example very clearly illustrates how to appropriately respond to such challenging situations. Had Maulana Ilyas complained about the wrong action of the villager, the central point of their relationship—which was related to inviting the man to God—would have shifted. The Maulana unilaterally ignored the man's action so that religion alone remained the basis of their relationship and no irrelevant matter became an obstacle in it.

In matters like this, there can be two ways of thinking. One is to give importance to the excesses committed by the other party and complain and agitate against them. The other is to ignore the excesses of the other party, exercise patience, and avoid conflict. The first approach leads to the central focus of the relationship with the other party to change completely, while with the second approach, the central focus continues to remain unchanged.

### **Equalising Matters**

In the Second World War, America and Japan were enemies. They caused immense damage to each other. But their inimical relations were soon to come to an end. It happened in this way: In 1945, America dropped two atom bombs on Japan, which destroyed two Japanese cities, Nagasaki and Hiroshima. This event greatly incensed the Japanese. They began talking about taking revenge against America.

Now, this was a very delicate situation. Had Japan decided

to tread the path of revenge, it would have only led to further devastation. But at this time, Japan's leaders and intellectuals adopted an approach that turned the minds of the Japanese people from a negative direction to a positive direction. They said that if in 1945, America had devastated two Japanese cities, then Japan had, before this—in 1941—destroyed America's Naval Base at Pearl Harbour. So, in this way, matters had now been equalised between the two. Hence, the Japanese must now forget the issue and put themselves instead to the task of constructing Japan anew. The result of this balanced and positive thinking was that in some years' time, Japan became a much stronger country than before.

Whenever a dispute arises between two parties, generally, each party takes a very one-sided stance. It recounts only the excesses of the other party. As a result, its thinking becomes imbalanced. It forgets its share of excesses and only remembers those of the other party. This way of thinking always proves to be destructive, for both individuals and for entire communities and nations.

This imbalanced way of thinking is called *tatfeef* in the Quran (83:1-3). That is giving short measure to others. In a dispute, an imbalanced way of thinking always leads to devastating results. In contrast, a balanced way of thinking always takes one towards progress. Such people who give short measure will remain in a state of deprivation in the Hereafter.

## Importance of Understanding Context

In order to understand an issue properly, it is necessary to have a proper understanding of its context. The importance of context is such that if the context changes, the entire meaning of an issue can also change. To understand this issue, consider the following example. Commenting on my book *Tazkeer-ul-Quran*, a certain person wrote about me, saying, ‘Leaving aside the issue of differences with Maulana Wahiduddin’s ideology, which level of defeatism and cowardice a historian of the future will place on Maulana’s view that only if the Muslims of India live as no-problem people [without rights] will they obtain peace in the country, otherwise not, he alone knows.’ (*Ulema-e-Deoband ki Tafisiri Khidmat*, p. 49).

In this critical remark, the author does not quote anything from my writings. Instead, he has written some words on his own and they have been declared as my viewpoint. This method is completely non-intellectual and non-academic. In the above passage, what is claimed to be my viewpoint is not my viewpoint at all. My point is that in this country, the position of Muslims is that of *dayees*, those who communicate the message of God to others while the position of non-Muslims is that of *madu*, to whom the message has to be communicated. In other words, the relationship between Muslims and others is not a relationship between communal rivals, rather it is a relationship between those who invite people to God (*dayee*) and those people who are to be invited to God (*madu*).

If the relationship between two social groups is that of rivals and adversaries, then their relations will be established accordingly. In such a situation, one group might justifiably launch an agitation, for the law of the land permits them to peacefully launch such protests against the government or other groups. An example of this might be a movement of workers against capitalists for demanding certain rights.

What is right and what is wrong in this matter can be determined by the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah. Therefore, when we look at this matter in the light of Islamic teachings in this regard, we find that the status of Muslims is that of *dayees* and those of non-Muslims is that of *madu*. This relationship between *dayee* and *madu* is a very delicate one. This means that the status of the *dayee* group is that of givers and that of *madu* is that of takers. It is the demand of this relationship between *dayee* and *madu* that Muslims have to sedulously refrain from indulging in the politics of protest and demand. Such activities will harm the process of normalization of relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. This delicate relationship requires that the members of the *dayee* group must solve their own problems through their own positive efforts.

From this clarification, one can gauge that what I had said about inviting people to God has been taken out of context by the writer, and referring to it, he sought to link it to another, unrelated context. In this way, the actual objective of my argument has been made to appear to be completely different.

## Problem of Memory

A certain person was continuously disturbed on account of some bitter memories of the past. Because of this, his health deteriorated. One day, I recited a couplet to him that was written by an Urdu poet, Akhtar Ansari (1909-1988):

*Yaad-e maazi azaab hai ya Rabb*

*Chheen le mujh se hafiza mera*

Remembrance of the past is a curse, O Lord!

Snatch away from me my memory.

On listening to this couplet, the man remarked that it was beautiful. In response to his comment, I said I disagree with it. Explaining my opinion, I said that memory is a great blessing. It is because of our memory that we know things and recognize them. If the supplication made in the above couplet was actually accepted and a person's memory was wiped out, he would only externally appear to be a human being but in actual fact would become lower than even a goat and sheep. I added that I knew many people who had lost their memory because of illness in old age. Their condition was such that they could neither speak anything nor recognise anyone. They lived in this way in a state of helplessness for a few years and then died.

The right way of thinking in the above matter is that instead of wiping out their memory, one should try to transform one's bitter memories into happy memories.

For instance, suppose a person owes some money to somebody and is unable to repay his loan, and because he constantly remembers this, he is in deep sadness. The right method for this person is to distinguish the loan from the sorrow of being presently unable to pay it. Of course, he should make efforts to repay the loan, but he should not be obsessed with it to the point that he becomes overwhelmed by sorrow about it. He should recognise that the problem of mental tension would be more severe than the problem of his debt. If the problem of debt is just a problem, mental tension is a sort of mental suicide.

By right thinking, one should save oneself from the foolishness of converting a relatively small problem into a big problem for oneself.

### **Contentment and Progress**

Often, one hears that a certain company has gone bankrupt. Often, the reason for this is what can be called ‘seeking to leap beyond one’s reach’. Generally, it happens that a company’s assets are only a few million dollars, but it makes a plan for a project for which several billion dollars are needed. For this purpose, it takes credit based on interest from a bank. The loan needs to be returned in installments with interest. Now, if the company’s earnings continue as estimated, it will be able to pay the installments. But if for any reason, the company’s income declines considerably, it

will no longer be able to pay the installments. The breaking of this balance is what is called 'bankruptcy.' This is such a problem that, actually speaking, every materialistically-minded person is afflicted by it, in some form or the other.

Now, why does this problem arise? There is a very deep cause for this. Most human beings seek more and more. To stop at a certain point with regard to something that they desire is against their thinking. It is this that creates the above problem. In a materialistic way of thinking, there is really no solution for this malady. A person who habitually thinks in terms of material 'success' can never save himself from it. For him, to stop at a certain limit as far as material acquisition is concerned is against his thinking, and that is why, in his case, recommending this solution will not work.

In this matter, the practicable or workable solution is just one—and that is Hereafter-oriented thinking. In line with Hereafter-oriented thinking, the solution to the above problem is that a person should be content with obtaining that quantum of things that are sufficient to satisfy his needs in this world, and for the Hereafter, he can desire according to his wishes. That is to say, he should be content in getting according to his needs in this world and should turn the direction of his desire for more towards the Hereafter.

In brief, the formula for this is to willingly accept the limited in this world and to desire the unlimited in the Hereafter.

## Unilateral Adjustment

When a dispute arises between two individuals or groups, each party tries to make the other party accept its position or claim and to extract what it regards as its rights from the other party. This method is completely against Nature, however. It only results in a temporary problem turning into an unending one. Not only does the problem not end, but, moreover, new problems arise that make the original problem even more intractable.

There is only one solution to a dispute—and that is unilateral adjustment. The first party to agree to unilateral adjustment is always successful. In contrast, the party that does not agree to this must always pay the price of its stance—and that is, to have to accept with disgrace that very same resolution that it could have agreed upon at the very outset with honour but refused to do so.

In the Quran, this principle is explained in these words:

‘Reconciliation is best’ (4:128). In the Quran, these words appear in the context of a marital dispute, but it is a general principle and applies to all aspects of life, be they small or big, personal or collective.

The opposite of reconciliation is war. The psyche of war is that each party wants to obtain what they regard as their right by defeating the other party. In contrast to this, the method of reconciliation is based on the principle of give-



and-take. In this method, in case of a dispute, each party tries to ensure that no clash occurs and that the dispute is resolved through peaceful discussion and on the basis of bilateral agreement.

In the case of war, the focus of each party is on what is present. They want to capture what appears to be present in front of them. Those who are obsessed with the war mentality consider the capturing of what is presently available as a victory and the loss of it as defeat. In contrast, a person committed to working for reconciliation focuses on the future, rather than the present. His insight tells him that there exists much more than what presently appears before him, which, although not presently visible, can be obtained through wise action. This foresightedness is the secret of great achievements.

### **Ease in Difficulty**

In the Quran, a universal principle of Nature is expressed in these words: ‘So, surely with every hardship there is ease; surely, with every hardship there is ease’ (94:5-6).

Here, we are provided with a teaching that can be called ‘high thinking’—that is, thinking by rising above problems. Its purpose is to nurture in a person a way of thinking that is not centred on problems but rather rises above problems to find solutions. A person who possesses this sort of high thinking will very quickly discover that where only

difficulties seemed to exist, opportunities were also present through which not only could the problems be solved but also one's failures could be turned into successes.

One can cite several such examples from the past as well as the present day. One example is from the 13th century, when warlike Mongol tribes from Central Asia came out of their mountainous homeland and spread across large parts of Asia, destroying the Abbasid Caliphate and extending their sway over many Muslim towns, from Samarkand to Aleppo. This event was described by the famous Muslim scholar Ibn al-Athir al-Jazari (d. 1233 C.E.) in these words: 'If someone were to say that from the time God Almighty created Adam until now, the world has not witnessed anything like it, they would be speaking the truth.' (*Al-Kamil fit-Tarikh* by Ibn al-Athir, vol. 10, 333)

Now, this appeared, on the face of it, to be a big problem, but in this challenge, an aspect of ease emerged. And that was, that the Mongols themselves entered the habitations of Muslims. This led to interaction, in different forms, between the two. Through this, the Mongols learned about Islam, and within a few decades, most of them had entered its fold. Thus, in this war with the Mongols, on the face of it, the Muslims had lost, but at the very same time, Islam attained great success. This historical fact was expressed by a Western historian in these words, 'The religion of the Muslims had conquered where their arms had failed.' (Phillip K Hitti: *History of the Arabs*, part III, p. 488)

## **Mistake of Generalisation**

One form of faulty thinking is what can be called ‘Making a generalisation.’ It is to take one particular example and project it as a general phenomenon and, on that basis, to present a generalised opinion about a subject as a whole. Making generalisations is so common that only a few people can be said to be free from it.

Consider the following case. In the Bible (Mathew 10:34), Jesus is quoted as having said, ‘Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.’

Now, this saying attributed to Jesus has the status of an exception in the entire corpus of utterances attributed to him in the Bible. Most of the other utterances attributed to him in the Bible are based on teachings such as love and ethics. This being the case, to take the above words and claim that Jesus’ mission was to pick up the sword, is to project what is an exception as a general rule. This would be a completely wrong generalisation, which would be academically unacceptable.

This same sort of wrong generalisation has been made with regard to the Quran. Taking some verses about war in the Quran, some people claim that the Quran is a book of war and violence. Now, this is actually a very erroneous generalisation. The fact of the matter is that more than 99% of the verses of the Quran are those that are related to such

positive themes as peace and humanity. Less than 1% of the verses of the Quran provide instructions for defence in case of open aggression by an opponent. In this context, asserting that a few verses represent the overall teachings of the Quran is entirely inaccurate and lacks scientific validity.

This evil of making generalisations is very widespread in our society. Many people's mentality is such that if there is someone they adore, they select some of his virtues and project them in a grossly exaggerated manner, using these few virtues to present a supposedly complete picture of the person. On the other hand, they ignore the virtues of someone they dislike, and, instead, search for and extract some of his faults. They express these faults in a very exaggerated fashion in order to create a misleading general impression about the person as a whole.

Both these forms of generalisations are completely wrong. This method of forming an opinion about someone or something is not intellectually sound and is also unethical and unjust. In a society where many people engage in such generalisations, people will have wrong impressions of each other, impressions that have no basis in reality. I have experienced this sort of wrong generalisation in the course of the mission of inviting people to God. Some people, focusing on just one aspect of my writings, sought, on the basis of this, to create a misleading general impression about me and my views. Such a method, while not being academic, is also dishonest.

## Practical Method

Once, I happened to meet a madrasa student whose head was shaven. During our conversation, he related that the madrasa administrator had had all the students' heads shaved off. The reason that the administrator cited was that he did not like long hair. I asked him if the students whose heads had been shaved off had protested against this action. He replied that they had not. Apparently, the students felt bad about the administrator's action, but they remained silent because the madrasa would have expelled them if they protested.

Seen from the point of view of principles, strictly speaking, the administrator's having the boys' heads shaved off was for the students a provocative act. However, the students did not gauge this act in terms of the yardstick of principles or ideology. Instead, they agreed to accept on pragmatic grounds an action that on theoretical grounds or in terms of principles was unacceptable.

If one reflects on the matter, one will discover that most people behave in just the same way in their personal life. When they are faced with some challenging situations related to their personal life, they agree to accept and adjust to a situation on pragmatic grounds even though they may not fully agree with it on theoretical grounds or in terms of their principles. But these very same people often do not display the same sort of wise pragmatism when a challenging issue arises that relates to the community they

identify themselves with. Instead of responding to the matter pragmatically and adjusting accordingly, they view it in ideological terms and react emotionally, which only worsens the situation. In their personal affairs, these people are pragmatic and agree to make suitable adjustments in order to protect their interests, but when it is an issue of the community they identify with, they often become impractical and refuse to make the same sort of pragmatic adjustment. The reason for this difference in behaviour is a lack of intellectual awakening.

The biggest weakness of present-day Muslims is lack of intellectual awakening. No movement has emerged among them that could engage in promoting their intellectual nurturing in the light of the principles of the art of right thinking. The outcome of this is that present-day Muslims are deprived of intellectual development. Many people are simply living at the animalistic level, knowing nothing about intellectual growth and the process of positive thinking.

## **Result-Oriented Action**

The Prophet Moses appointed his brother Aaron to be responsible for the Children of Israel and went to Mount Sinai for some days. It so happened that, thereafter, the Children of Israel began worshipping a calf made of gold. Aaron tried to stop them, but seeing their insistence, he later kept silent. When Moses returned, he destroyed that golden calf, threw it away, and punished the culprits.

Here, it is interesting to ponder why there was this difference in action between Moses and Aaron. What was the reason that Aaron tolerated in practice an issue of what was open *shirk* (association of something with God), while Moses acted very differently, by destroying it?

The reason is that Aaron realised that had he taken practical action, one group would support him and the other group would remain with the worshippers of the calf in the form of an idol. In this way, the community, getting divided into two groups, would fall prey to internecine conflict. But this apprehension did not exist in the case of the action that Moses took. Moses enjoyed a dominant position in the community. On account of this, it was possible to enforce the decision he wanted on the community.

From this incident, one can learn that action must always be result-oriented. If by engaging in a certain action a desired outcome will result, one should do so. But if there is an apprehension that by taking a certain step, the situation will worsen and an additional evil will arise, one should desist from engaging in such action.

### **Mental Tension, Brainstorming**

The modern industrial age has led to new sorts of complications for human life. These things were always present in a preliminary form prior to this, but human beings are now experiencing them in a full-blown form. Among these is the problem of what is called 'mental tension'.

The reason for lack of peace of mind is mostly what is called 'mental tension' or 'mental stress'. Now, it is a fact that in the present world, it is not possible for any person to avoid tension or stress completely. This being the case, the question arises as to what should be done in this matter.

I believe that tension or stress is not evil in itself. Rather, if seen from the right perspective, it can be a boon for human beings. Mental tension produces a form of 'brainstorming' in a person's mind that activates one's thinking process. If a person did not experience mental tension, he would not experience 'brainstorming.' Moreover, without this sort of 'brainstorming' inside a person's mind, a person cannot grow intellectually.

To seek to stop mental tension directly or to try to suppress it is not a healthy solution to the issue. This sort of 'solution' is actually a sort of intellectual anesthesia. And this sort of anesthesia, which seeks to stop the process of a person's intellectual growth, is synonymous with taking a person to the animalistic level. One can say that the right solution is to seek to appropriately manage mental tension, rather than seeking to suppress it.

## **Peace for what Purpose?**

Some scholars define peace as 'the absence of war.' But people who have unleashed war in different places in the name of rights and justice do not accept this definition.



They argue that there is nothing as peace for the sake of peace, or peace for its own sake. According to these people, the peace that is acceptable is peace with justice, not peace without justice.

But this is an example of unrealistic thinking. The fact is that peace needs to be established first. Once peace is established, conducive conditions then emerge that make it possible for people to avail of the available opportunities. A situation of war is an obstacle to availing of opportunities. Establishing peace for its own sake enables people to remove obstacles in this path. By availing opportunities in a climate of peace, people can eventually obtain the rights or justice that they seek.

If a person's thinking is such that he sets conditions for establishing peace with his opponent, that is, only if, along with peace, he also gets what he regards as justice, he will never attain peace, nor will he secure justice. Such peace is simply not possible in this world for anyone. This sort of thinking is not in line with the law of Nature, and so it can never produce a positive outcome. The right way of thinking in this matter is that peace must be linked with opportunities for engaging in positive actions, and not with obtaining justice.

### **Thinking Behind the Times**

In March 2002, a new concept emerged among Arab countries in the context of a possible solution to the issue

of Palestine. And that was, that if Israel withdrew to its 1967 borders, the Arab countries would recognize it. Talking to a Jewish person, an educated Arab presented this proposal before him. The Jewish person replied, smiling, 'Dear neighbour, you are too late.'

Now, the above proposal of the Arabs seems nice, but it is certainly not practicable. It is actually thinking behind the times, which is something that is not workable in practice.

It is a bitter reality that for the Arabs, with regard to the issue of Palestine what was possible in 1917 had become impossible in 1948. In the same way, what was possible for them in 1948 no longer remained possible in 1967. Likewise, what was possible for them in 1967 did not remain possible for them in 2002. These facts, no matter how bitter they may seem, are a historical reality, and to change history is simply not possible for anyone—neither for the Arabs nor for anyone else.

In 2002, what was possible for the Arabs as regards the issue of Palestine was just one thing—and that was, that they should accept whatever they had gotten in the form of Gaza and the West Bank and construct their future on this territory. However, unfortunately, as a result of the impractical leadership of their emotion-driven leaders, they have made even this territory that they have acquired doubtful for themselves. The Arabs should know that they cannot obtain anything through violent movements like

*Hamas* and the *Intifada*. Through negative actions, positive outcomes cannot be produced. Movements like *Hamas* and uprisings like the *Intifada* are, in actual fact, simply an expression of emotional reaction. And in this world of realities, emotional upheavals cannot produce any meaningful outcomes.

The fact of the matter is that the solution to an issue that prevails in the present can never happen on the basis of the past. The solution to a present problem always happens on the basis of the present. This is an irrevocable historical law. No exception to this law is possible for anyone.

### **The Secret of Reform**

Many people mistakenly think that the root of all problems are those individuals who happen to control the levers of power in their times, and that, therefore, if they are removed from power, all evils will come to an end. This sort of thinking has repeatedly been shown through experience to be completely wrong.

Consider the following case: Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist group, believed that the government of King Farooq (d.1965) was the root of all evils facing Egypt and that if somehow this government could be toppled, everything in the country would be set aright. In line with this thinking, they joined with some Egyptian army officers, overthrew King Farooq,

and forced him out of the country. But after this, all that occurred was that the conditions in the country became even worse than before.

Similar was the case with another Islamist group, the Jamaat-e Islami of Pakistan, which repeated the same blunder, with greater intensity. In the era of President Ayub Khan, they assumed that the root of all the problems of Pakistan was the military government of President Ayub. They unleashed a tumultuous movement against this government, so much so that the government fell. But despite this, there was no improvement in Pakistan's conditions. Later, too, Pakistan's Jamaat-e Islami once again made the same mistake. It assumed that the government of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the root of all evil. And with the help of other so-called 'pro-Islamic' elements, they launched movements directed to overthrow Mr. Bhutto, so much so that with the help of General Zia ul-Haq, in 1979, they succeeded in getting Mr. Bhutto hanged. However, the conditions of Pakistan continued to worsen.

This experience with regard to the fallacious 'root of all evils' theory has been frequently repeated in present times. And every time, this theory has completely failed.

The fact is that all forms of evil are related to thinking. The secret of reform is the transformation of human consciousness or thinking. Without this, no reform is at all possible.

## **Lack of Right Thinking**

Once, a riot broke out in a certain town between members of two communities. In this riot, members of one community faced large-scale loss. Their economy was laid to ruins. I happened to meet a man from this town who belonged to this community. I asked him why the riot had taken place. He said that a procession of members from the other community had entered the locality inhabited by members of his community and there they began raising slogans against this community. On this, residents of the locality got agitated. Some youths among them, he said, then ‘took one step’ as one of them explained. I asked him what that step was. He explained that they had thrown some hand bombs on the procession. This enraged the people in the procession so much that they began to indulge in violence. I asked the man what the slogan was, reacting to which those youths had taken that step. He explained that the sloganeers had called for the locality to be emptied of its inhabitants.

During our conversation, the man claimed that it was necessary to give a reply to this sort of provocative plot. I replied to him saying that he should rather call it an imaginary plot that could never turn into a reality. I asked the man if, after the sloganeering and the rioting, his locality had been emptied of its inhabitants. Enthusiastically, he replied, ‘Certainly not!’, adding that the people of his community still remained there. On this, I remarked

that this meant that the slogan raised by the people in the procession had dissolved in the air, as it were, and was not able to be converted into reality.

Listening to the man, I said that the processionists' slogan was so weak that even after engaging in bloody rioting, it could not empty the locality of the inhabitants of his community. That being the case, I asked, what was the need for those members of his community to get so agitated over such a weak slogan? The simple reply to the slogan would have been to respond in line with the ancient saying, 'Dogs keep barking, and an elephant continues to walk on.'

The response of the agitated inhabitants of the locality in the example above is one of a lack of right thinking. Right thinking can fully save a person from bloody rioting. But in the above case, wrong thinking resulted in the people of a locality experiencing the two-sided devastation of humiliation and loss. Wrong thinking instigates a person to react to a provocative situation in the very same manner, while right thinking teaches a person how to defuse a provocative situation and render any provocation ineffective.

## **Secondary Position**

A lesson is imparted every day in the congregational prayers that are held in mosques. This lesson is that when, out of 10,000 worshippers, 9999 worshippers, praying behind a

single person (the imam), accept a seemingly secondary position, it becomes possible for the congregational prayers to be offered.

The same formula is desirable in the life outside the mosque too. In a society where this thinking is absent, there can be no unity or progress. In life, accepting a secondary position is essential for any progress.

For the life of a community, this way of thinking is indispensable. However, it cannot come about on its own. It requires conscious nurturing and training. Generating conscious awareness or awakening is the main task, not indulging in zealous protests and agitations.

## **Media Culture**

In the contemporary age, ‘media culture’ is arguably the primary factor responsible for the corruption of people’s mindsets.

A central feature of the modern media, be it print, electronic, or digital, is the method of one-sided reporting. Because most people obtain news from the media, on account of one-sided reporting in the media, they develop faulty opinions. They form their opinions on the basis of one-sided reporting.

One-sided reporting involves selecting bad news and ignoring good news. The media has the status of an industry. On account of this, it regards highlighting the bad news of

any country or society as profitable while good news is not considered worthy of being reported. This behaviour of the media has made human thinking negative all across the world.

Consider an interesting and insightful example in this regard. I often listen to the broadcasts of BBC London. One day, I was listening to a programme on BBC London's Hindi service. At the end of the programme, some letters were read out. One such letter was from a person based in Mauritius. In his letter, he complained that they broadcasted news from Hindi-speaking areas and that even though there were many Hindi-speaking people in Mauritius, they never gave any news of that country. The BBC announcer laughed, and replying to the sender of the letter, said, 'Media is the name of reporting bad news. In your country, there is only good news, and for the media, good news is no news.'

It is against the system of Nature that there be only evil in the world and nothing else. The fact of the matter is that, in line with the system of Nature, in this world, if there is 1% evil, then, at the very same time, directly or indirectly, 99% good also exists. But the media never gives information to people about the fact that the evils that it reports are just 1% of the entire society and not the whole of it.

Prior to 1947, almost all the newspapers in the subcontinent would highlight only negative aspects of the British. The positive aspects of the British administration



rarely found a place in their columns. And so, many people began to hate the British. Likewise, before 1947, newspapers that were influenced by the Muslim League used to ignore the positive aspects of the Hindus and published only negative things about them. The result of this was that many Muslims of the Indian subcontinent developed mistrust of Hindus. Similarly, these days, large sections of the Muslim media in many parts of the world do not refer to the positive aspects of America. As a result of this, many Muslims have developed an intense dislike for America and have even begun to imagine that America is the Enemy No. 1 of Muslims.

The status of the media is that of an industry. On account of the media's own business expediencies, it is not possible for it to stop its method of one-sided reporting and follow a method of two-sided reporting. The practical solution in this regard is not complaining against the media, but, rather, reforming one's own thinking. We need to promote conscious awareness among people. We need to nurture among them the ability to engage in right thinking and reflection so that they do not get affected by the faulty reporting of the media. By becoming capable of analysing things, themselves, they should be able to arrive at a proper opinion about them. An instance of the use of this method of analysis would be that if someone hears a Muslim leader claiming that America is the Enemy No. 1 of Islam or if someone reads such a claim in a Muslim newspaper, they

should ask that if this claim were indeed true, how is it that more than six million Muslims are comfortably living in America (including even relatives of the Muslim leaders or writers who make such a wrong claim about America)? How is it, they must ask, that thousands of Islamic institutions have been established in America and are able to run freely? How is it that in America, grand religious gatherings take place the likes of which do not happen even in Muslim-majority countries?

If one engages in this sort of analysis of the claims of such Muslim media and Muslim leaders, the actual facts of the matter will come to light. In other words, we must not depend on the 1% of news provided by the media, but, rather, along with it, should form a picture by also including the remaining 99% of news. If one does this, one will save oneself from forming wrong and highly skewed opinions.

## **Contrarian Thinking**

Sometimes, an individual or a social group engages in violence in order to obtain what it regards as its rights. In terms of results, this approach is actually completely counter-productive, because history shows that through violence, one loses, whereas through peace, one gains.

Throughout much of human history, numerous dictators, such as Hitler and Stalin, have engaged in violence on a huge

scale, seeking thereby to obtain their supposed objectives. But without any exception whatsoever, the end result of the violence that was engineered by all of these people was just one—and that is, devastation.

The same is the case with Muslims. In present times, in different places, Muslims have taken to violence in the name of obtaining justice or securing rights, but the result of this has always been counter-productive. In the wake of this violence, their conditions only became worse.

One example of this is Palestine. In line with the Balfour Declaration, in 1947, Jews were given a third of the territory of Palestine while Arabs were given two-thirds, which included the whole of the city of Jerusalem. However, the Arabs did not accept this division and announced that they would push the Jews into the sea. This struggle of the Arabs was, from its very beginning, carried out by using violence, and it remains so even today. Despite, enormous sacrifices of loss and property, all that the Arabs obtained from this approach was humiliation and deprivation.

According to a hadith, the Prophet frequently emphasized that “God grants to gentleness what he does not grant to harshness.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2593) From this, we can learn that if for some reason hostility arises between oneself and another person, one’s planned response to this should be on the basis of peace, not violence.

When a person adopts the method of violence, in many cases it is because he is overwhelmed with emotions.

He sets off on the path of violence fired with negative emotions such as hate and vengeance. But instead, if he can keep his negative emotions under control, and, make an objective analysis of the matter in a realistic manner, if he plans the course of his actions wisely, he will never adopt the method of violence. Under all conditions, he will engage in action while remaining non-violent, even if in adopting the method of peace he might have to face some deprivation initially. It often happens that in adopting the peaceful method, a person feels that they have to tolerate some loss. But if they think in a balanced manner, they will realise that they ought to willingly agree to tolerate a small loss so that they will not be compelled to face a bigger loss if they refuse to do so.

### **Rising Above the Situation**

If a dispute arises between two individuals or between two communities, often, people are not able to think by rising above the temporary problem that is at hand. Things like the immediate loss and the question of honour so overpower their minds that it does not remain possible for them to separate themselves from the dispute and think dispassionately, and thereby make a more appropriate decision based on farsightedness.

The result of this narrow thinking and shortsightedness is that many individuals as well as communities remain

engrossed in some problem or the other. A major portion of their time and energy is continuously wasted on non-beneficial things in the name of solving problems, although the intelligent thing to do would be to use their resources for the work of positive construction and progress.

When a problem arises, the wise thing to do is to ignore immediate considerations and make a bold decision in terms of the future. After a problem has arisen, one's entire attention should be given to ending it. Agreeing to tolerate immediate loss, one should act prudently. In case of a dispute arising, one should make ending the dispute one's objective. In making efforts to end the dispute, one should keep the future in mind, and not just the past or the present. One's focus should be on the opportunities that are still available, and not on the losses of the past. This is one of the secrets of progress.

### **Critique is Not Something Bad**

Many people think that critique is something bad. But the truth is that, while being non-critical might help in garnering popularity for oneself, it is, however, not beneficial as far as the task of any sort of meaningful reform is concerned.

Critique can actually be a very lofty sort of action. It is necessary for a person's intellectual development. To declare critique as taboo will lead to intellectual stagnation.

It will cause the thinking process to cease. And in a human society where the thinking process ceases, its members may still appear to be humans, but in terms of their intellect and understanding, they will be at the animalistic level. They will be deprived of intellectual progress, which is the greatest asset in this world for any person.

### **A Better Gift for A Child**

Some people who have not obtained much material affluence worry about what they should do so that their children do not face the same sort of economic hardship as they do. The right formula for such people in this regard is contentment for themselves and progress for their children. In other words, they should be content with the economic standards that they have achieved and lead their life accordingly, while they should leave it to their children to engage in the world and through hard work, obtain greater success and progress. Parents should be content with being only the initial step for their children. They should leave it to their children to climb the remaining steps and reach the top floor.

The biggest gift that parents can give their children is not to leave behind a huge mass of wealth for them but to provide them with conditions that encourage them to engage in positive activities and enthusiasm for hard work. Material wealth that is obtained without hard work is not good. This sort of easy money gives more harm than benefit to those who obtain it.

## Secret of Unity

How is it possible to establish unity in a social group? A suggestion that is often offered in this regard is to remove the differences that exist among members of the group so that unity can be established. The thinking behind this suggestion is that when there are no longer any differences among members of a group, unity will automatically come about. According to this way of thinking, if differences exist among people, there is no unity, and where there is unity, no differences exist. But this thinking is actually completely baseless. Through this sort of formula, unity can never be established in the world.

Difference is actually a natural thing. It is a compulsory part of the nature of every human being. This being the case, doing away with differences is simply not possible. In this matter, the proper and practicable formula is to remain united despite differences. This is what unity is, and not trying to become united by doing away with all differences. This is because, in this present world, it is just not possible that people's differences can be bulldozed in such a way that they are completely wiped out.

In this present world, the true formula of reform can only be one that is in line with human nature. A formula that is not in line with human nature is not practicable or workable. And something that is not practicable or workable is also not beneficial.

## **Opportunity with Problem**

The system of the present world is based on the principle of hope. Here, after every night, a new morning arrives. Here, every difficulty is accompanied by ease. Here, along with every problem, the door of opportunities remains open. To put it briefly, every problem is accompanied by a solution. This is an eternal principle of this world that can never change.

Even if there appears to be no solution in sight, one should know that the formula that one is using in seeking to solve the problem is not in accordance with the circumstances. In such a situation, one should use a new formula. So, for instance, on realising that the method of war cannot solve a problem, one should at once abandon it and use the formula of peace.

## **Successful Marital Life**

Providing guidance for good relations between spouses, the Quran says:

Live with them in accordance with what is fair and kind; if you dislike them, it may be that you dislike something which God might make a source of abundant good. (4:19)

This teaching applies to both husbands and wives. From it, one learns that good marital relations do not depend on whether the husband gets a wife who is totally to his liking



or that the wife gets a husband who is what she would like ideally. The fact of the matter is that, in accordance with Nature's laws, for this to happen is just not possible. The secret of a successful marital life lies in adjusting to a spouse who in some respects may not be in accordance with one's liking. One must search for likable aspects in them amidst aspects that one may not like.

A song by the famous singer Mohammad Rafi (d. 1980) became so popular that it went on to become the heartbeat of many a mother and father. When Mr. Rafi sang the song himself, he began crying, being overwhelmed with emotion.

In this song, a father, bidding farewell to his daughter after marriage recites some verses, some lines of which are as follows:

*Babul ki duaen leti ja,*

*Ja tujh ko sukhi sansaar mile.*

*Maike ki kabhi na yaad aye,*

*Sasural mein itna pyar mile.*

Take your father's blessings and go,

May you obtain a world of joy.

May you get so much love in your in-laws' home,

That you never remember your parents' home.

But this message is against the law of Nature. In this present world, no girl or boy can obtain joy and love in

this way. This being the case, to present the above sort of joy and love as the yardstick for a successful life for spouses is doing injustice to them because it engenders in them an unrealistic mindset. And in this world, it is simply not possible to lead a successful life on the basis of an unrealistic mindset.

## BELIEF IN GOD AND SCIENCE

Science, in its true essence, is simply the discovery of the natural world's knowledge—knowledge that the Quran had already alluded to with these words: “We shall show them Our signs in the universe and within themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this is the Truth.” (Quran 41:53)

The picture of the universe revealed through modern scientific discoveries perfectly aligns with what the Quran described earlier. In this way, modern science acts as a detailed explanation of the clues provided in the Divine Book and also supports its truth. A brief overview of these discoveries is presented here.

According to modern science, the universe began about 13.8 billion years ago. Since then, it has undergone various gradual changes to reach its current form. The full story of this journey can be found in books on the subject and can also be experienced visually at a scientific planetarium. I personally saw this presentation at the ‘National Planetarium in Washington.’

Scientific studies indicate that about 13.8 billion years ago, a “super-atom” appeared in space. It contained all the particles that now make up the universe today. In other words, the entire universe once existed as a massive ball, densely packed together. The particles in this ball were held together by a very strong internal force of attraction. According to the known laws of physics, it was impossible for these particles to separate and move outward on their own.

At that moment, a tremendously powerful explosion took place inside the super-atom. Immediately after the explosion, its particles scattered and started moving rapidly outward. Over time, these particles gathered together in vast space. From these groups, the cosmic bodies we recognize today—stars, planets, galaxies, the solar system, Earth, and the Moon—were formed.

This explosion of the super-atom demonstrates two key points. First, that there was a powerful being outside the universe who already existed and, through deliberate intervention, triggered this extraordinary event—causing the particles to move outward instead of inward.

The second notable point is that explosions usually cause destruction. From firecrackers to bombs, every explosion—without exception—results in damage. However, the explosion of the super-atom was an exception: it caused no destruction. Instead, it led only to healthy and constructive outcomes. This unique event demonstrates that the Creator of the universe has infinite

power. He has full control not only over the event itself but also over its results.

Studies show that our universe is constantly expanding, spreading outward like an inflating balloon. This indicates that the universe had a definite beginning. If the universe were eternal, its expanding nature would have caused it to end by now. The fact that the universe had a beginning also suggests that someone must have brought it into existence. Something that doesn't exist can only begin when there is already someone who exists and chooses to create it.

There are countless signs in the universe showing it has a single planner and controller. If there were more than one, the universe would definitely fall into disorder.

For example, the distance between the Earth and the Sun is about 93 million miles. This distance stays constant. If it were to change, the consequences would be severe. For example, if the distance increased to 200 million miles, Earth would become so cold that water, plants, animals, and humans would all freeze. Conversely, if the distance decreased to 50 million miles, the heat would become so extreme that everything, including humans, would burn up.

This indicates that the Sun and the Earth have the same Creator. If they had different creators, each might act according to their own will, and the distance between them would constantly change. Due to this imbalance, human life on Earth would not be possible.

In the vast and unknown reaches of the universe, our planet Earth stands out as a rare exception. Here, we find water, air, plants, and many other essentials for human life. In the emptiness of space, we don't know of any other world where such conditions for life exist. This exception indicates that the world was not created by lifeless matter alone. Instead, it is the work of a conscious being. If the world were merely the result of random material forces, there would be many Earth-like planets—not just one.

Everything in our world is filled with meaning. The significance of things shows that this world is the product of intentional creation. No other theory can account for the wisdom and purpose we observe in the universe.

Consider the size of the Earth as an example. Its current circumference is about 25,000 miles. This size is very significant. If the Earth's circumference were 50,000 miles, its gravity would become so strong that it would interfere with proper human growth. In such a scenario, only dwarf-sized humans would exist.

Conversely, if the Earth's size were reduced to 12,000 miles, its gravitational pull would be so weak that it couldn't contain human growth. People would grow as tall as palm trees. Additionally, many other adverse conditions would develop, making all forms of human civilization and progress impossible.

When we consider these facts, it becomes clear—from

a scientific perspective—that we have no choice but to accept that this world has a Creator, and that this Creator must be one. The reality is that our choice is not between a universe with God and a universe without God. Instead, our true choice is between a universe with God and no universe at all. In other words, if we deny the existence of God, we would also have to deny the existence of the universe. Since we cannot deny the universe's existence, we also cannot deny God's existence. In this matter, there is no other option.

## RELIGION AND SCIENCE

The study of anthropology shows that the history of religion is as old as human history. Since humans have existed on Earth, religion has also been present. So far, no human society has been found that did not have religion. Even today—an age that some enthusiastic people believe is free of religion—is certainly not without it. Religion is still as alive now as it was in the past.

In today's world, alongside the traditional religious community, a new group of educated people has emerged, commonly called the modern class. Broadly speaking, this group can be divided into two categories. One includes those who, according to their own claims, deny the existence of God and religion. Such people are generally known as atheists. The second group comprises those who, although they do not follow religion in its traditional form, still consider themselves believers in God and religion, based on their own understanding. A well-known figure from the first group is the British philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872-1970). An example from the second group is the famous German scientist Albert Einstein (1879-1955).



## **The First Group: Bertrand Russell**

Bertrand Russell was an exceptionally intelligent man who lived a long life, continuing his studies from youth into old age. From his autobiography and other writings, we learn that, in his early years, he was most deeply interested in certainty. Naturally a seeker of knowledge, he longed for a kind of knowledge he could be absolutely sure of. This quest drew him first to mathematics. At the time, he felt he had found in it a reliable substitute for religion, for he perceived in mathematics the logical certainty he sought. He believed that, in its precise and unchanging truths, he had discovered the knowledge his mind had been searching for. In contrast, religion appeared to him as nothing more than a collection of superstitions. Consequently, he rejected traditional religion and embraced mathematics as his personal belief system.

However, as Russell continued to study more deeply, his confidence began to fade. He realized that his earlier beliefs were based on a superficial understanding of the facts. A more in-depth examination of reality did not support his initial conclusions.

Russell's later ideas are reflected in his book *Human Knowledge*. In that work, he presents clear arguments showing that, in today's world, human inquiry can never achieve absolute certainty. On one side, there are the limitations of human ability; on the other, the mysterious nature of the universe. Together, these factors make

certainty impossible. Ultimately, human inquiry only produces probability, not certainty. In other words, we cannot directly access reality. We can only say, based on probability, that a certain truth might exist—even if we cannot experience it directly.

The point Russell reached after a lifetime of study brought him very close to true religion. In Islamic terms, it could be said he achieved the stage of *La ilaha* (There is no god), but he never reached the stage of *illallah* (except God). And then he died.

Russell's statement—that human knowledge only leads to probability—is more than just his personal opinion. It is the widely accepted view of all modern scientists. This principle is now so well established in modern understanding that no informed person disputes it.

The fact that intellectual research shows we can only determine probability (in a purely academic sense) is very important. It means that, based on current knowledge, the distinction between science and religion—once assumed in earlier times—no longer exists. Now, reason holds the same position that belief once did.

Since ancient times, religion has taught that truth naturally belongs to the unseen world. We cannot observe it directly. Instead, we infer from outward signs that a certain truth exists—even if we cannot see it. Today, science holds the same view. Modern science states that we cannot see the

true essence of things; we can only observe their outward effects. From these effects, we infer that something exists—even if it is beyond our direct experience.

So for Bertrand Russell and people like him, it becomes necessary to accept the truth of religion based on the same level of probability they apply to scientific theories. Once they accept one, there's no valid reason to reject the other. They should understand that the real choice they face isn't between accepting or rejecting religion. The choice is between accepting religion—or rejecting themselves. If they insist on rejecting religion, they would also have to reject their own reasoning. And since rejecting themselves is not an option, rejecting religion isn't either.

### **The Second Group: Einstein**

A symbolic figure of the second group is Einstein. He dedicated his entire life to studying science. At the same time, he also experienced spiritual feelings within himself. That's why he explored religion as well. His belief in religion was just as strong as his belief in science. However, in his view, the two were completely separate subjects. In his words, the purpose of science is to understand *what is*, while the purpose of religion is to understand *what should be*. In other words, religion deals with inner conviction, while science deals with knowledge of the external world.

But this division isn't enough. Even with this separation, the core question remains—the one that originally sparked the debate between science and religion. From an academic perspective, this kind of split isn't very useful. The real challenge is figuring out how to unify science and religion. Religion represents divine knowledge, while science represents human knowledge. It's essential to find a way to bring both types of understanding together. Without this integration, a person cannot develop the kind of character that psychology refers to as an “integrated personality.”

The mistake made by Bertrand Russell and others like him was that they didn't understand the true nature of knowledge itself. That's why they couldn't arrive at the correct conclusion. Similarly, Einstein and those like him made the mistake of not understanding the true nature of religion. Because of this misunderstanding, they formed an idea of religion that did not match reality. The problem with this group is that they treat all existing religions as if they equally represent religion itself. There are about a dozen major religions in the world. In addition, there are hundreds of smaller ones. These people study all of them together. They see that each religion's teachings are different from the others. They don't find the consistency in religion that exists in science. Therefore, they conclude that religion is a personal matter—each person can believe whatever they want, and no one else needs to interfere.

But this idea of religion actually contradicts what religion truly is. So, what is religion? In its authentic form, religion

is a comprehensive ideology that provides a satisfying explanation of human life and the universe. It should answer all of a person's internal and external questions. Religion is a source of certainty for people. A religion that is not entirely based on truth cannot offer that certainty. And any religion that cannot provide this sense of certainty cannot genuinely be called a religion.

The truth is that modern scholars often make a few key mistakes when studying religion. Due to these mistakes, they haven't been able to fully understand what religion truly is.

1. The first point is that treating all existing religions as equally authentic and studying them on that basis is like combining superstition, astrology, and astronomy, and then trying to create a science of the heavens from the mixture. The scientific method in such cases is to separate unproven ideas and superstitions and to base the study of astronomy only on verified facts.

This is exactly the way we should approach studying religion. It's true that many belief systems are called religions today. However, when examined closely, it's clear that, from a purely academic point of view, not all religions have the same status.

Some religions lack any known historical background. Clearly, such religions are dismissed from the start because a religion without historical credibility isn't even

considered seriously. Similarly, many religions haven't proven that their current texts haven't changed over time. If the authenticity of a religion's own texts is uncertain, how can its truth be trusted?

There are several scholarly standards (scientific criteria) that must be used when studying religions. But when these standards are applied to today's religions, most of them don't meet the requirements.

Among all religions, Islam uniquely satisfies these scholarly standards. In that context, treating all religions equally and trying to find a common conclusion isn't logical. The best approach is to accept the religion that fulfills all necessary criteria and to record the others in history's library—not as equal alternatives, but as part of the historical record.

2. Once Islam is recognized as the true form of religion, all misunderstandings that come from viewing different religions as equal naturally disappear. It's similar to distinguishing myths from science when exploring the universe based solely on scientific facts.
3. Accepting Islam as the sole representative of religion provides us with a reliable source from which a clear and consistent system of religious beliefs can be established. For example, religions often contain different and conflicting ideas about God. Likewise, there are significant disagreements about prophethood and messengership. Opposing views also exist on what

the afterlife will be like. The same applies to all other religious concepts and beliefs. However, when we regard Islam as the trustworthy source of religion, we find clear and consistent beliefs—beliefs we can trust. Certainty is the most crucial aspect for which people seek religion. If all religions are regarded as equal, that essential certainty is lost.

4. A key question is: what kind of relationship should exist between religion and worldly affairs? This is a very important issue, and different religions have provided different answers. For example, in Christianity, worldly matters were seen as a necessary part of religion. As a result, religion began to seem impractical to many people. This eventually caused a conflict between the Church and the State, until they became completely separate. On this topic, Islam has offered some important guidelines. A few of these will be mentioned here.
  - A. An important teaching in Islam is found in a Hadith that states: “You are more knowledgeable about the affairs of your worldly life.” (Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 2363) This indicates that matters of a purely worldly nature—such as agriculture, gardening, urban planning, and economic organization—should be decided based on academic research. In other words, anything that research shows to be beneficial for humanity will also be regarded as valid in religion.

- B. Similarly, when it comes to religion and political rule, the Quran states that political power belongs to God. He grants it to whomever He wills (Quran 3:26). It also says that political authority is a form of test, just like wealth and children are tests (Quran, 10:14). This means that fighting to gain political power is not part of Islam's teachings. Islam teaches that those whom history naturally favors with political authority should be accepted by others, and others should see it as a test for themselves. They should not try to take this God-given test away through conflict.

### **A Preserved Religion: A Divine Blessing**

If the science of chemistry had stuck to the old, assumption-based practice of alchemy, it would never have advanced. Similarly, if modern astronomy had relied on the superstitions of ancient astrology, it could not have progressed. This principle applies across all fields of knowledge. Today, progress in various areas of study has only been possible after removing unscientific assumptions and building each subject solely on facts. We need to follow the same approach with religion.

By studying religion scientifically, we need to determine which religions still exist today in their original form and which ones have changed so much that they've lost their practical reliability. From this objective perspective, it



becomes clear that this position now only belongs to Islam. The original texts of Islam, its history, its teachings—even the language in which it was first revealed—have all remained fully preserved to this day. Islam provides us with a trustworthy religious system, along with everything else needed to lead a complete religious life.

## CONTENTMENT: THE SECRET TO SUCCESS

There's a well-known saying that reflects an important truth about life. It goes: "One who lets go of half in pursuit of the whole ends up with neither." The truth is that most people make decisions based on their desires and ambitions. Because of this, they often take actions that, in real-life situations, are not actually achievable. The result is that their efforts end in total failure—they lose what could have been theirs while chasing what was not.

This has been the story of many well-known Muslim leaders in modern times. Ignoring the facts, they made big decisions driven only by their desires and ambitions. The result was only destruction for the community. To understand this better, let's look at a few examples.

1. Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan was a prominent Pakistani leader and the son of the late Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, the former Prime Minister of United Punjab. Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan started his career as a military officer during World War II. In 1943, he became actively involved in

Muslim League politics. After the creation of Pakistan, he served as a minister in Punjab and held several high-ranking positions.

He wrote an English book about his life titled *The Nation That Lost Its Soul*. Its Urdu translation, *Gum Gashta Qaum*, was published in Pakistan by Jang Publishers, Lahore, in December 1995. The Urdu edition has 461 pages.

One chapter of the book is titled “*Liaquat Ali Khan*,” referring to Pakistan’s first Prime Minister. Several topics are covered in this chapter, and one of them is quoted here:

Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan was not fully acquainted with the facts or the geography of the nation over which he assumed the office of Prime Minister. Later, during the Kashmir conflict, Lord Mountbatten visited Lahore and delivered a message from Sardar Patel at a dinner attended by Liaquat, Governor Modi, and four Punjab ministers. Patel, a powerful figure in India, had sent a message stating that the principle agreed upon between the Congress and the Muslim League regarding princely states should be followed. That principle indicated that a state should join either Pakistan or India based on the majority population and geographical connection. Patel said Pakistan should take Kashmir and, in exchange, give up its claim to Hyderabad Deccan, where Hindus were the majority and which had no land or sea connection to Pakistan. After delivering the message, Mountbatten went to rest at Government House.

I was fully responsible for the Kashmir operation. I went to Liaquat Ali Khan and suggested that we wouldn't be able to drive out the Indian army from Kashmir with the help of tribal fighters. Even our regular army might not succeed in this mission. Therefore, we shouldn't reject Patel's offer. Nawabzada turned to me and said, 'Sardar Sahib, do you think I've gone mad that I would give up the state of Hyderabad Deccan—which is bigger than Punjab—for the sake of Kashmir's hills and valleys?'"

When I saw the Prime Minister's reaction, I was shocked to realize how unaware he was of the country's geography. His judgment was so poor that he prioritized Hyderabad Deccan over Kashmir. This was like living in a fool's paradise. The idea of gaining Hyderabad was just a fantasy, while Kashmir was practically coming to us on its own. He had no real understanding of how important Kashmir was to Pakistan. So, in protest, I resigned from overseeing the Kashmir operation. (Pages 231-232)

This statement by Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan is a clear example of the painful truth—that modern Muslim leaders fell into the trap described in that well-known saying. They couldn't tell the difference between what was possible and what was not. They chased after what they could never get. As a result, they lost what they could have had—and the thing they ran after was never really within reach.

2. Now here's another example of the same kind. This one goes back to the time before 1947, when the British still ruled the Indian subcontinent. It's taken from the Urdu weekly *Al-Jamiyat*:

Just a few days before the Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind conference in Amroha (May 3-5, 1930), a senior member of the Viceroy's Council, the late Sir Mian Fazl-i-Hussain, invited the renowned scholar Hazrat Maulana Ahmad Saeed Dehlvi and made him an offer. He asked the Maulana to ensure that the Jamiat didn't pass a resolution supporting cooperation with the Congress at the upcoming Amroha meeting. In return, he said, he would work with the British government to grant the Safdarjung Tomb and the surrounding property and land to the Jamiat for its scholarly work.

In his usual humorous style, the Maulana replied, "Mian Sahib, all the respected scholars and leaders won't let me be fooled like this. We are about to pass a resolution aimed at gaining the entire country—and you're offering us just a tomb, which is already Muslim endowment land." Mian Sahib was deeply disappointed by this response. The Maulana personally told this story to the writer. (Fifty Years of Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind, by Sheikh Abdul Haq Pracha Dehlvi, General Secretary of Jamiat Ulama Delhi Province, published in *Al-Jamiyat Weekly*, Delhi, January 2, 1970, page 8)

Now consider this 1930 event in light of what happened 75 years later, and it becomes clear that this situation turned out just like the popular saying mentioned earlier. Leaders at the time were given a valuable opportunity without even asking for it—but they missed out simply because their minds were set on something much bigger. The problem was, that the “bigger” goal was never truly achievable.

The British offer held the same potential as a proposal made to an English trader during Emperor Jahangir’s reign—one that trader quickly accepted. If the Muslim leaders 75 years ago had embraced the offer and transformed it into a hub for education, scholarship, and outreach, the long-term consequences could have been so profound that history itself might have looked very different.

The two examples above show what has happened with almost all of today’s well-known leaders. Each had great chances to do meaningful work. But almost all of them aimed for the impossible and chased after it. As a result, they didn’t even get what was possible—while the impossible, of course, never came to them.

For example, Syed Jamaluddin Afghani was given significant opportunities to work by the Ottoman Empire in Turkey. However, he chose to turn against the very empire that had supported him. As a result, he was forced to leave Turkey. In Egypt, Syed Qutb considered the offer to work in the Ministry of Education too minor. Instead, he set out to overthrow President Nasser’s government. The result was that he lost both the smaller opportunity and the larger one.

A similar situation happened in Pakistan with Syed Abul A'la Maududi. The former president, Muhammad Ayub Khan, offered Maududi and his associates the chance to create a large national university with full government backing. Through it, they could educate and train the younger generation. But once again, Maududi saw the offer as too small. He started a vigorous movement to take complete control of the government. After all his efforts, the result was that he lost both the small opportunity and the big one.

This is the story of many Muslim leaders today. They became so absorbed in their imagined ambitions that they failed to see reality. They kept pursuing big goals, even though those goals were never truly within their reach. Meanwhile, they completely overlooked the opportunities that were realistically available to them. Due to this unrealistic mindset, these well-known leaders only ended up setting examples of failure. They never became models of practical success. In their attempt to gain more, they ended up losing even the little they had.

The root of this serious mistake was that they saw the small as merely small. They couldn't recognize the potential for something greater hidden within the small. They didn't understand the basic truth of life: that every action begins with something small. No journey starts from the top. A person who understands this truth begins small and eventually reaches greater heights. But someone who fails

to understand this will never even find a place to start—due to their unrealistic thinking. The law of this world is: whoever finds a starting point for their journey will, sooner or later, reach their destination. And whoever fails to find that starting point will never reach their goal—no matter how hard or how long they keep struggling. In the language of reform, this life principle is called contentment—and contentment is, without doubt, the one true secret to all individual and collective success.

A well-known saying of the Prophet appears in several Hadith collections with slight variations in wording—for example, Sahih Muslim (Book of *Zakat*), Tirmidhi (Book of *Zuhd*), and Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal. The wording recorded in Musnad Ahmad is translated here as follows: “The Prophet of Islam said: ‘Successful is the one who accepted Islam, was given just enough provision for his needs, and whom God made content with what He gave him.’” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith no. 6572)

This Hadith is often understood in a personal and financial way. However, its meaning is actually much wider. The full message is this: whether for individuals or nations, whatever they receive now—or what is realistically possible given current circumstances—they should accept it willingly. By being content with it, they can start their work. The first benefit is that they will succeed in making the most of what they already have. Additionally, what they lack today may come to them in the future—through planned and determined effort.



## What is Terrorism?

In today's world, a harmful trend called terrorism has emerged. Although terrorism is widely condemned, there is still no clear and universally accepted definition. Based on my study of the Quran and Hadith, I understand that terrorism can be defined as the use of weapons by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). According to a well-established principle in Islam, only an established government has the authority to declare war (*al-rahil lil-imam*).

What we now call terrorism has entirely resulted from armed actions carried out by non-governmental groups. Such armed movements are clearly banned in Islam. People do have the right to express their views peacefully, but under no circumstances are they allowed to start an armed campaign.

Furthermore, an established government must fulfill certain conditions before engaging in military action. For example, even a government can only go to war for defensive reasons—it has no right to initiate an aggressive war. Similarly, any legitimate war must be officially declared. Islam prohibits undeclared wars. Additionally, even in a justified defensive conflict, the government is only permitted to target combatants. It is strictly forbidden to harm or kill non-combatants, even during war.

When we examine these facts, it becomes clear that

Islam permits only one kind of war: a defensive war. Any other type of war—such as an aggressive war, a proxy war, a guerrilla war, or an undeclared war—is entirely forbidden in Islam. No excuse can justify such wars in the name of Islam.

Based on this definition, every terrorist movement is clearly illegal. Calling such a movement “Islamic jihad” does not make it legitimate. Every such act is a form of rebellion against God’s commands, and it certainly has no basis in Islam.

### **Open Condemnation is Essential**

One of the commandments given to believers in the Quran and Hadith is to forbid what is wrong. This means that when something wrong occurs, remaining silent after witnessing it is a serious offense. It’s not enough for someone to simply avoid participating in the wrongdoing. If they see it and choose to stay silent, they are considered indirectly responsible.

For example, today, in many places, Muslims are engaging in actions in the name of jihad that the global media reports as acts of terrorism. It wouldn’t be wrong to say that, in this matter, almost all Muslims worldwide are, in God’s eyes, guilty. The reason is that, as far as I know, there isn’t a single well-known Muslim who openly condemns this violent behavior.

One group of Muslims sees this kind of violence as true *Islamic jihad*. Some even call suicide bombing an act of seeking martyrdom and support it fully. Another group uses words that sound like condemnation, but in reality, they are not. For example, they might say, “There is no terrorism in Islam,” or “Islam does not allow terrorism.” But they won’t clearly state that in specific places, Muslims are carrying out violent campaigns that are acts of terrorism and go against Islam. In such cases, their condemnation is nothing more than self-deception.

There is also a group of Muslims who seem to clearly condemn such actions by naming them, but then they also use defensive language that shifts the blame to the enemies of Muslims instead of the Muslims themselves.

These methods of condemnation do not align with Islamic teachings. The proper way to condemn is not only to state that terrorism is un-Islamic but also to openly and clearly reject the violent acts carried out in the name of *jihad* in various locations. It should be clearly stated that this is not *jihad*—it’s corruption and chaos.

It is the guilty silence of Muslim writers and speakers that has allowed this violence in the name of *jihad* to continue. In this criminal violence, while the self-proclaimed *mujahideen* are directly involved, the rest of the Muslim community is indirectly involved. And from an Islamic perspective, there is only a difference in degree between direct and indirect involvement—not in the nature of the act itself.

## **The Case of Failure**

The power of peace surpasses that of violence. Peace is also the path of wise people, while violence is the way of the unwise. When someone turns to violence, it shows they have failed to use a more effective method to reach their goal. It also reveals that the person has acted foolishly in trying to solve their problem instead of acting wisely. Peace and violence are not just two different approaches—they represent two different levels of humanity. A person who chooses peace elevates their sense of humanity, while a person who chooses violence diminishes themselves from that higher human standard. When someone faces a problem and chooses peace, they develop a positive mindset. They raise their moral standards. They elevate their character. They demonstrate through their actions what it truly means to be human. Conversely, when someone opts for violence to solve a problem, they lower themselves to a less human level, making their claim to humanity seem doubtful in practice.

Peace and violence both reveal a person's true nature. One path shows that a person is genuinely human. The other indicates that, even if they appeared human on the outside, they were actually acting like an animal.

## **Religion is in Danger**

One cause of hatred and violence is emotional politics based on the slogan: "Religion is in danger." Some writers

and speakers present an exaggerated or distorted picture, giving people the impression that their religion is under threat from others. As a result, under the banner of protecting religion, rallies, marches, slogans, and flag-waving politics begin. This kind of politics does not actually protect religion from danger but instead, in the name of saving religion, destroys society's peace and puts it in real danger.

If religion were truly in danger, it would clearly mean that an outsider is threatening it. In this way, the slogan "Religion is in danger" fuels hatred between one group and another. When such politics of hatred fail to eliminate the supposed threat to religion, it shifts to a new phase: the politics of despair. This politics of despair then advances to violent politics. When violence also fails to achieve its aims, it shifts to suicidal politics. Emotionally charged youth, filled with intense hatred, express their frustration through suicide bombings against their perceived enemies. The politics of religious danger eventually transforms into a politics of religious suicide. Those who rise up in the name of life end up becoming messengers of death—for themselves and others.

The truth is that the only way to escape this destructive politics is to declare violence completely unacceptable in any situation. No excuse, no matter how justified it seems, should be considered valid for using violence.

The world we live in today is full of differences. Everyone is Mr. Different, and every woman is Ms. Different.

Naturally, this causes various disagreements among people. When these disagreements turn emotional, they can lead to hatred and violence, making society look like a graveyard.

There is only one solution to this problem: people must be made to understand that they should always act within the boundaries of peace. Under no circumstances should they step outside the framework of peace. This mindset can only be cultivated when people are fully aware of the truth that in this world, things can only be achieved through peaceful means. Nothing worthwhile has ever been accomplished through violence. Violence only leads to destruction—it never helps in building anything.

The only advantage of politics based on the “Religion is in danger” slogan is that it gives a few individuals the chance to appear as high-profile leaders. They become prominent temporarily. Crowds gather around them. They enjoy material glamour. But when it comes to religion and religious people, they are left with nothing but a hostile environment, lacking moderation, and forced to live amid hatred. Victims of violence, they end up making their own future unsafe.

The ultimate result of such politics is simply that a few individuals become celebrities. But this approach does not help in real nation-building—nor can it. It might assist in creating leaders, but it is completely ineffective when it comes to building a strong and united community.

## **From Revenge to Violence**

It often happens that when one person is hurt by another or when one group feels wronged by another, the desire for revenge is immediately sparked. They rise up to retaliate against the other party. Such people forget the warning echoed throughout history in silent words: before seeking revenge, think carefully, because revenge will ultimately be avenged.

Thus, one party takes retaliatory action against the other, and then the second party again takes revenge on the first. In this way, the cycle continues until both are so damaged that they are no longer able to take further revenge. When an individual or group has a genuine grievance, the solution is not counteraction but forgiveness and moving forward. Forgiveness ends the conflict at the very first stage. However, if forgiveness is not shown, a chain of hatred, revenge, and violence begins that never ends.

Revenge is directed at another, but the greatest victim is the one who seeks it. The high cost of a revenge-driven mindset is that a person's mind turns into a factory of negative thoughts. Instead of using their resources for self-improvement, they start using them to harm others.

If the other party causes you fifty percent harm, then in your act of revenge, you end up wasting your remaining fifty percent of strength as well. Revenge means that after being attacked by a killer, a person then tries to kill themselves.

The truth is that revenge is harmful every time, and letting go without seeking revenge is good in all situations. If the person you seek revenge on was your enemy, then by doing so, you turn yourself into your own enemy. And when someone becomes their own enemy, who can save them from destruction?

### **War is Outdated**

Broadly speaking, there have been two eras of war. The first was the early period when battles were decided by the sword. The second is the modern era, where bombs are used in warfare. There is a fundamental difference between these two periods. When a sword was used, it could only strike one enemy at a time. In the age of bombs, war no longer serves the same purpose. Today, war only means destruction. The bomb dropped on the enemy also causes destruction to the one dropping it, in various ways. Under these conditions, war has become a pointless act. War is now madness, not a strategic action aimed at achieving any goal.

The truth is that after the development of new weapons, war has become something to avoid. When war, in a positive sense, produces no results, then waging war in such circumstances is madness, not wisdom.

### **Against the Spirit of the Age**

The present era is characterized by globalization. The entire world has become like a global village. From this



perspective, violence or armed conflict is an outdated action that goes against the spirit of the times.

If you ask those who are fighting with weapons today why they are at war, they will say that they are fighting to change the established government. They will say that they want to create a new system, and for that purpose, it is necessary to take control of the government. But this way of thinking is simply the result of being unaware of the time.

In today's era, such changes have taken place that now there's no need to control any government. Without taking over the government, a person can still do everything they want.

## **The Need for Tolerance**

Intolerance leads to violence, while patience fosters peace. These two statements summarize the essence of both peace and violence. In a society where patience is valued, peace will prevail. Conversely, in a society lacking patience, violence will emerge. Violence is neither beneficial for the perpetrator nor for those it harms.

Patience is a high moral and human virtue. In contrast, a lack of patience is an animalistic trait. Genuine forbearance is not the forced endurance of someone who has no other choice; it is an act of the highest moral order. The goal that people often try to reach through intolerance can be better achieved through patience.

When a person becomes intolerant in a difficult situation, they weaken themselves in facing it. But when someone stays patient during an unpleasant situation, they keep all their strength. They can handle the situation more effectively.

Remaining patient despite an unpleasant situation shows that a person has the ability to control themselves. And someone who has the strength to control themselves becomes so strong that no one can defeat them.

## **The Benefits of Peace**

All good deeds in the world have been accomplished through peaceful efforts. Nothing good has ever come from the use of violence. No bridge or road has ever been built through violence. Scientific discoveries and technological advancements have never been achieved through violent means. Educational institutions and research centers have never been established through violence. The shaping of metal into machines or city planning have been accomplished through peace, not violence. From social welfare to infrastructure, every achievement has always been realized through peaceful strategies.

Violence is a destructive act, and no constructive result can come from it. This is a law of nature that cannot be changed.

## **The Need to Change Muslim Policy**

In the last week of April 2002, the '*Fourth International Conference of the Muslim World League*' took place in Makkah.

About five hundred Muslim scholars and intellectuals from various countries attended. The conference's theme was stated as "Islam and Globalization." A report on this conference appeared in the Lahore-based monthly journal *Muhaddith* (May 2002). A section of that report is shared here with minor adjustments.

The Grand Mufti of Bosnia, Mustafa Cerić, representing the views of former Bosnian President Alija Izetbegović, said that considering Bosnia's painful history, it is appropriate to suggest that Arabs should pursue peace and reconciliation with Israel. Dr. Yusuf (Joseph) al-Qaradawi immediately took the microphone and strongly criticized Izetbegović's view in very harsh words. According to the report, it appears that no one at the entire conference spoke up to support Izetbegović (page 54).

When Izetbegović declared Bosnia an independent Muslim state, which led to a bloody war, he became a hero in the Muslim world. But now, when he talks about peace and reconciliation, he is seen as a zero among Muslims. Carefully analyzing this incident reveals some instructive lessons.

1. **Besieged Mentality:** Muslims today are living with a siege mentality. Their unqualified intellectuals and leaders have convinced them that they are oppressed and victims of enemy plots. People with such a mindset will understand conflict but will struggle to grasp peace.

2. **A Half Message:** The message sent by Mr. Izetbegovic was incomplete. Because of this, it could not be accepted by anyone. In its current form, Izetbegovic's message reflects helplessness. And no Muslim would be willing to pursue any policy based on helplessness. Izetbegovic should seek a peaceful method of action instead of an armed one. Once he does that, his message will become acceptable to people.
3. **The Attitude in Muslim Conferences:** After reviewing the proceedings of the Makkah conference, it is clear that all the Muslim speakers there only spoke the language of complaint and protest. They delivered speeches about problems. This is the condition of all Muslim conferences nowadays. At every conference, there is only loud mention of problems. This mindset among scholars and intellectuals has made all Muslim conferences of the present age completely unproductive. The purpose of a conference should be to identify opportunities positively, not to loudly complain about problems. In the words of the Quran, it is about finding ease within hardship.

When the Prophet of Islam migrated from Makkah to Madinah in the thirteenth year of prophethood, he arrived there after overcoming numerous difficulties. Upon reaching Madinah, the first sermon he delivered to the people is recorded by Ibn Hisham under the title:

“The First Sermon of the Prophet in Madinah”

This entire sermon is still available in one of the earliest biographies of the Prophet, *Sirah Ibn Hisham*. If you read it, you won't find a single word of complaint or protest. The main message of the sermon is summarized in this sentence:

“Anyone who can save himself from the fire, even with just a piece of date, should do so.” (*Sirah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 1, p. 500)

It is surprising that the followers of this very Prophet are now engaged in complaints and protests, contrary to the Prophet's example. Even in Makkah and Madinah, this act against the Sunnah is being done openly. If any servant of God advises them to leave this path, they become his enemies. Such actions, even when performed in sacred places, undoubtedly invite God's wrath.

The real matter is that what is happening to Muslims at present is not, in its reality, the oppression of humans, but a direct warning from God. All of this is being done to alert the Muslims. The only way to success for Muslims is that they repent. They should completely abandon the path of violence and fully adopt the path of peace. Whatever they want to do in the name of Islam or the Muslim community, they should do it within the limits of peace. Other than this, there is no way to salvation or success for them.

THE  
CULTURE  
OF PEACE

## WHAT IS PEACE?

Some scholars define peace as the absence of war. This definition is, from the dictionary or literal point of view, correct. Whenever there is no war or violence between individuals or groups, a state of peace begins to prevail on its own.

However, for peace to be established in any society, the ending of violence or war is not enough. To define peace as the absence of violence or war is a negative definition. A positive way of defining peace is on the basis of the positive attributes that characterize peace. Accordingly, a society can be said to enjoy peace if positive and constructive thought and activity flourish at all levels. When such thought and activity flourish, a society can truly be said to enjoy peace.

The establishment of peace in a society can be likened to the lifting of the gates of a dam, leading to a river being filled with water in plenty. Life is like a flowing river that seeks to surge ahead, driven by its own inner force. It stops its journey only when some artificial barrier is placed in its path. In the absence of such a barrier, life flourishes in all its dimensions, impelled by nature.

Violence and war are barriers that seek to block the natural flow of life. In contrast, peace opens up all the closed doors that seek to impede life's onward journey.

We often talk of peace in the context of war. But this is a very narrow and restricted notion of peace. The fact is that peace is deeply linked with the whole of human life. Peace is a complete ideology in itself. It is the master-key that opens the doors to all kinds of success. Peace creates a favourable atmosphere for success in every sort of endeavour. Without peace, no positive action—small or big—is at all possible.

### **Peace is the Religion of the Universe**

The Quran tells us: The sun cannot overtake the moon, nor can the night outpace the day; each floats in [its own] orbit. (36:40)

Referring to an astronomical phenomenon, this Quranic verse tells us about the principle on which the system of the entire universe is based. And this is the principle of peace. There are innumerable entities in the cosmos, and all of them are in constant motion. Yet, they do not clash with each other. Every entity in the cosmos carries on doing its own work in its own orbit. None interferes in the sphere of the others. That is why they never clash with each other.

This 'culture of peace' is also what human beings should



imbibe. They should base their lives on precisely the same universal principle that governs the rest of the cosmos. This means they must abandon the path of violence and confrontation and tread the path of peace.

The culture of the cosmos is a 'culture of peace'. It is because of this peace that the cosmos has been functioning for millions of years and yet has not witnessed any confrontation that could have impaired its functioning. If a 'culture of violence' had guided the cosmos, by now it would have been devastated, and there would have been no possibility for human life to exist.

The same Creator who created the rest of the cosmos created us human beings, too. The Creator wants human beings to adopt the very same 'peace culture' that He has established throughout the rest of the vast cosmos. The only difference is that this 'peace culture' prevails in the rest of the cosmos on the basis of nature, while humans are independent creatures and have free will. And so, God wishes that they should freely decide to adopt this 'peace culture' in their lives.

### **The Quran, A Book of Peace**

The Quran is, without doubt, a book of peace. It is not a book of violence and war. All the statements of the Quran are, directly or indirectly, related to peace. The very first

phrase in the Quran is: ‘In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful.’ In other words, the highest attribute of the God who has sent this Book is mercy, and this Book is an expression of this attribute of His mercy.

All the verses of the Quran are, directly or indirectly, based on peace. There are more than 6000 verses in the Quran. Of these, hardly 40 are about commandments of *qital* or war—in other words, less than one percent.

Those who regard the Quran as God’s Book can be considered to be true believers only when, abiding by the teachings of the Quran, they become fully and completely peace-loving. On no condition whatsoever should they take to the path of violence.

In this regard, one needs to stress the need for people to distinguish between Islam, on the one hand, and Muslims, on the other. They must not label the actions or behaviour of Muslims as ‘Islamic’. The fact is that the behavior of Muslims must be judged on the basis of Islam. Islam should not be sought to be understood on the basis of the Muslims’ behaviour. Islam is an ideology. A person can be truly considered to be a Muslim only if he follows the teachings of Islam. Those who do not follow Islamic teachings do not have anything to do with Islam, even if they claim to be its champions.

## Peace Versus Violence

Peace results from well-planned effort or action, while violence is a passion-driven, aggressive action. A peace-loving person first thinks and then acts. In contrast, a violence-loving person first acts and then thinks. Peaceful action is based on hope, in the beginning as well as at the end, while violent action is based on false hope in the beginning and frustration in the end.

A peace-loving person is well-grounded in truth. A violence-loving person stands on falsehood. Peace and positive constructive work go hand-in-hand, while violence is wholly destructive. A peace-loving person lives in the love of others, while a violence-loving person lives in the hatred of others. Peace ends in success, and violence in utter failure. Peaceful action abides by the law, while violent action is lawless.

A peace-loving person overlooks problems and takes advantage of the available opportunities, while a violence-loving person ignores the available opportunities and gets entangled in a pointless battle with problems. The path of peace cultivates a garden bursting with flowers, while the path of violence creates a thorny jungle of hatred and enmity.

In peace, one fulfills the obligations one owes to God as well as those one owes to God's creatures, including other human beings. Violence, on the other hand, is a violation

of the ‘rights of God’ as well as the rights of people. If peace is heaven, then violence, in comparison, is sheer hell. Choosing peace is making the right choice. On the other hand, if one chooses war, it proves that one has failed in the test of making a correct choice.

In this world, there are many things that are not desirable, but they exist for the purpose of testing us—for instance, alcohol. Alcohol exists not so that people should drink it, but, rather, so that they should avoid it and thereby prove that they can distinguish between good and bad. The same thing holds for war, too. War is something that can be resorted to, but the right thing for human beings to do is to desist from it.

In the ancient past, considering the then prevailing conditions, permission was given for defensive war. This permission was in accordance with the law of necessity. But now, in the changed conditions of today, this necessity no longer exists. And that is why there is now no need at all for war.

### **Reconciliation is Best**

The Quran describes a particular natural law in the following words: ‘*reconciliation is best*’ (4:128). In the event of a conflict between two parties, they can engage in violent confrontation. But there is another method they can choose: to immediately come to an agreement and end their conflict. This is what reconciliation is about.

It is very rare for this sort of reconciliation to be equally in accordance with the desires of both parties. In most cases, this reconciliation happens on a unilateral basis. That is to say, one of the two parties sets aside its desires and agrees to settle the dispute according to the desires of the other party.

Why is this sort of unilateral reconciliation taken to be 'best'? The reason is that conflict brings constructive activity to a halt. The benefit of agreeing to reconciliation is that one is thereby spared the need to waste one's time, strength and resources on useless confrontation and so can focus on constructive efforts instead. A course of action that is opposed to reconciliation is always and inevitably a course leading to destruction. The method of reconciliation is always, and in every case, a beneficial one.

History is witness to the fact that whenever anyone has attained any success, it has only been after adopting the method of reconciliation. Not a single person has ever achieved any real success through confrontation and fighting. The importance of reconciliation lies in the fact that it provides an opportunity to fully exercise one's right to use the available opportunities. On the other hand, the path of confrontation leads one to waste one's energies in trying to destroy others, as a result of which one can engage in no constructive work whatsoever. The secret of success lies in stabilising oneself and building oneself up, and definitely not in the destruction of hypothetical enemies.

## No to ‘Corruption in the Land’

The Quran describes a certain form of behavior in the following words: When they are told, ‘Do not cause corruption in the land,’ they say, ‘We are only promoters of peace.’ (2:11)

This Quranic verse refers to people who, on the face of it, are engaged in some reformist effort but whose method is not proper. Their method is such that, in actual practice, it causes *fasad*, or strife. Here, ‘corruption in the land’ means that as a result of their methods, people start clashing with each other. Their methods lead to stirring up hatred between people, weakening their moral sensibilities and engendering negative thinking. All these are forms of ‘corruption in the land’ to which this Quranic verse refers, because they destroy social peace, leading to violence and confrontation.

From this Quranic teaching we learn that for an action to be considered proper, it is not enough that it appears to be started for a good cause. In addition to this, it is necessary to keep in mind what sorts of results are produced by activities undertaken in the name of reform. If these activities give rise to hatred, tension and violence among people, then, despite claiming to be reformist activities they are definitely not so. Rather, they are destructive activities, leading to strife. Those who engage in such activities should be considered criminals and enemies of humanity, and certainly not reformers or servants of humanity.

An action can be considered a genuine reformist effort

only if it is carried out within the limits of peace and humaneness. All activities undertaken in the name of reform that disturb social peace and cause loss of life and property are wrong. Essentially, efforts in the name of reform must also truly bring about reform in terms of their results. If, instead, they result in what the Quran refers to as *fasad* or strife corruption, then they are actually themselves a form of *fasad*, no matter what seemingly beautiful words may be used to describe them.

### **Ending Conspiracies**

The Quran tells us, 'If you persevere and fear God, their designs will never harm you in the least' (3:120). This Quranic verse indicates a very important fact of life. And that is, that the real issue for individuals or groups is not of whether they might have enemies who are conspiring against them. Rather, it is whether or not they have sufficient *sabr* or patience and have adopted the necessary precautionary measures to cause any conspiracies against them to fail.

If conspiracies can be likened to the rain, patience and God-consciousness are like a strong roof. Rain is a problem only for those who have not bothered to make a firm roof over their house. For those who have made such a roof, this is not the case.

This world runs on the principle of competition. That is why it is but natural that sometimes rivalries develop

between individuals and groups, which may later assume the form of conspiracies against each other. Whenever something like this happens, one should consider it not as an enemy's conspiracy but, rather, an expression of the law of nature. Thinking of the act as an enemy's conspiracy inculcates a violent approach. In contrast, if one takes it to be a result of the laws of nature, one will nurture a way of thinking that can lead one to take wise measures to avoid falling prey to such conspiracies—just as a wise man does not demonstrate against the rain, but, rather, builds a roof over his house to save himself from getting wet.

### **No Extremism**

The Quran tells us: Do not go to extremes in your religion. (4:171)

The same point is made in a hadith, according to which the Prophet declared, 'You should restrain yourselves from committing excesses (*ghulu*) in religion. The previous communities were destroyed due to their having gone to extremes in religion.' (*Sunan al-Nasai*, Hadith No. 3057; *Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 3029; *Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 1851)

Extremism in every matter is wrong. It is the very antithesis of the essential spirit of religion. *Ghulu* can easily escalate into violence and confrontation. Those who have fallen prey to the psychological malady of *ghulu* refuse to accept moderation. They regard peace and moderation as being



less than ideal, and that is why they are very easily attracted to violence. And it is always in the name of attaining their goal that they resort to violent methods.

The opposite of *ghulu* or extremism is moderation. If you are moderate in your thinking, you will think in terms of peace. You will use only peaceful means in all you do. Moderation and peace are closely interlinked. Where there is moderation, there will also be peace. Likewise, where there is peace, there will be moderation.

In contrast, the *ghulu-psyche* always leads one towards extremism. And extremism very easily turns into violence and confrontation. *Ghulu* and violence are thus closely interlinked. This is why *ghulu* is looked at with great disfavour in Islam. Inclining towards *ghulu* is another name for addiction to violence. And abstaining from *ghulu* is another name for cherishing moderation.

### **Killing One Person is Like Killing All Humanity**

The Quran tells us: ‘Whoever killed a human being, except as a punishment for murder or for spreading corruption in the land, shall be regarded as having killed all mankind.’ (5:32)

Killing someone is a very heinous act. It is legitimate only if someone becomes a definite danger to social peace. To kill someone without genuine justification is tantamount to the slaughter of the whole of humanity, because such an action

is a gross violation of respect for life, which, in turn, leads to the taking of human life becoming a seemingly easy affair.

With regard to the consumption of alcohol, there is a tradition of the Prophet which tells us that if a large quantity of something leads to intoxication, then a small quantity of it, too, is forbidden. (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 3681)

The same principle applies in the case of killing as well. It is as reprehensible and enormous a crime to kill a single person as it is to kill a large number of people. The only difference between the two is of degree, but in terms of the nature of the act itself there is no difference whatsoever.

From the Quranic verse quoted earlier one can gauge the great importance that Islam gives to peace and security. Islam demands that if a single person is killed, the entire society must respond as if it is not a single individual, but, rather, the whole of humanity, that has been slain.

## **Dousing the Fires of Violence**

The Quran tells us: Whenever they kindle the fire of war, God puts it out. (5:64)

From this Quranic verse, we learn something about God's creation plan. We learn that this plan is based on the principle of peace. We learn that if someone is bent on kindling the fires of violence, we should try to put out the flames through peaceful measures so that the fire does not spread. It should never be that one party throws bombs and the other party retaliates in the same way. This is definitely

not the proper way to respond. The right way to respond is that if someone plants a bomb, you must defuse it.

The above-quoted Quranic verse indicates that throwing a bomb in retaliation for a bomb thrown by someone else is not the way that God wants us to behave. God wants us to respond in situations like this by seeking to defuse bombs and render them ineffective at the very outset itself, so as to prevent the disruption of peace.

It is natural that one will inevitably face various unfavourable conditions in society. No human society has ever been free of these. The solution to this problem is not to try to eliminate these conditions. Rather, their real solution is that we must make sure that we do not add an additional, undesirable condition to the already existing ones. We must not add one more bomb to the existing number of bombs. In this way, we can help prevent unfavourable conditions from further worsening. And, in this way, we can solve them. This is the real and effective solution to the problem. There is no other possible solution.

### **Strife After Reform**

The Quran tells us: Do not corrupt the land after it has been set in order. This is for your own good, if you are true believers. (7:85)

This Quranic verse indicates a fact of nature—that this world has been created perfectly. Here, everything has

been made according to the plan desirable for it. This means that humans should act in a balanced way in this world, without distorting the balanced pattern of nature. If we distort this plan of nature, it will lead to chaos.

Innumerable processes are at work in the world, all in accordance with nature's equilibrium. The earth moves in its orbit and revolves non-stop. The sun continues to pour its light on the world. The winds blow, the rains come, the rivers flow, the plants and trees grow, and so on. Innumerable processes like these carry on without any interruption, day and night, all of them in a perfectly peaceful manner, with no violence or confrontation whatsoever.

This is the plan of nature, and human beings should live according to it. Hence, we must completely abstain from violence and lead our lives entirely on the basis of the principle of peace. Those who behave contrary to this engage in what is termed in the Quran as *fasad*, or corruption. They are definitely not engaged in promoting reform.

### **Avoidance, Not Confrontation**

The Quran instructs us, 'Avoid the ignorant'. (7:199)

The opposite of avoidance is confrontation. The method of avoidance keeps one within the peaceful sphere, while the method of confrontation leads to violence with others.

No one—whether individuals or groups—lives alone in this world. People live in proximity to many others, each of whom has his own objectives and separate agendas. It is because of this that people and groups repeatedly come into confrontation and conflict with each other.

There are two ways to respond to this situation: avoidance of conflict, on the one hand, and confrontation, on the other. There is simply no third option. If one chooses the path of confrontation, it will only result in fighting. The whole of human history testifies to the fact that fighting only enables one to give vent to one's pent-up emotions and that it brings no real benefit at all. Hence, one must abstain from, and consciously avoid, confrontation. This sort of avoidance not only saves one from further harm but also gives one the opportunity to carry on in the journey of progress without being stopped by any hurdles that may come one's way. Such avoidance may seem like cowardice in the face of an opposing party, but its purpose is actually to save oneself from useless confrontation and to carry on with one's journey free from obstruction.

### **Patience, The Secret Of Success**

The Quran instructs us: Have patience: God is with those who are patient. (8:46)

According to a hadith the Prophet is said to have declared that it is greatly beneficial to exercise patience in the face of things we do not like. Success goes along with patience. Along with difficulty, the Prophet added, there is ease. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 2803)

It often happens that when people are faced with a difficult situation or when they undergo a bitter experience, they get worked up. In some cases, they may even take to violence. But this sort of reaction is a result of being unaware of the laws of nature. The fact is that the laws of nature always support those who are firmly established in truth and justice. Such individuals and groups, if they act with patience and not in haste, will inevitably be successful. Success will inevitably come to them.

In most cases, those who fail are those who act hastily and who engage in emotionally-driven actions before their appropriate time. On the other hand, those who are patient always succeed.

According to the Quran (46:35), the opposite of patience is haste. A person who behaves in a patient manner follows the creation plan of God. In contrast, someone who deviates from the creation plan can be sure that it will be impossible for him to succeed.

## **Avoid Conflict**

The Quran tells us: Let them not dispute with you on this matter. Call them to the path of your Lord. (22:67)

From this Quranic verse, we learn that not disputing with someone means not giving the other person the chance to dispute. That is to say, whenever differences arise between two parties, they should keep them within the limits of peaceful dialogue. They must never let these differences go beyond their initial limits and turn into a violent conflict.

In this world, tensions constantly arise on various grounds between individuals and groups. In itself, this sort of tension is something quite natural. It happens everywhere, and under all sorts of conditions. The real thing to consider here is that we should make sure that these tensions or differences do not get out of hand. A disagreement remains within bounds as long as it remains within a peaceful framework. When differences turn into physical confrontation or violence, they transgress their limits. No differences are in themselves wrong if they remain within their limits. But when they go beyond this point, they become unacceptable.

This Quranic verse explains the proper course of action for a purpose-driven person. A person who has dedicated himself to a serious objective can succeed only when his central purpose remains the sole subject of engagement between him and others. Allowing any unrelated issue to

become a point of contention is like poison for a person committed to a purpose.

Now, the question arises as to how such a person, who is motivated by a positive purpose in life, can establish a friction-free atmosphere in his relationship with others. The answer is that this is possible only by his exercise of patience in a unilateral manner. In practical terms, there is simply no other way. A person with a purpose in life adopts a policy of unilateral avoidance of confrontation, through which he is able to establish a balanced atmosphere in his relationships with others so that his journey continues uninterrupted.

### **War Only for Defense**

The Quran tells us: Permission to fight is granted to those who are attacked, because they have been wronged.(22:39)

This Quranic verse teaches us an important principle that also relates to inter-community and international relations. And that is that the only legitimate war is one that is fought in defense, in response to clear aggression. All other forms of war are forms of *zulm*, or oppression, and oppressors have no place in God's world. As this Quranic verse indicates, wars other than those that are defensive have no justification whatsoever.

War is something truly despicable. According to the eternal law of nature, peace is the general rule or norm,



while war is an exception. War can be resorted to only under extreme necessity—in order to protect oneself, and that, too, only when all possible peaceful ways to avoid confrontation have been sincerely tried and have failed.

### **The Path of Patience wins God's Help**

The Quran instructs us: Have patience: God is with those who are patient. (8:46)

The path of patience can also be called the path of peace. The opposite of the path of patience is the path of violence. The above-quoted Quranic verse refers to a natural law—that those who walk on the path of peace will find that at every step natural factors support them. On the other hand, those who adopt violence are not supported by the laws of nature—and for such people there is nothing in this world but failure and destruction.

What does walking on the path of patience mean? It means that in the face of difficult or unfavourable conditions and situations, a person does not lose his tolerance, and so his positive thinking remains unimpaired. He distinguishes the possible from the impossible, and begins his journey from what he knows to be possible. He does not hanker after immediate results. Rather, he adopts the gradual way. He does not lose heart in the face of loss. Instead, he keeps walking ahead with the future in mind. He accepts what the present gives him. As for what he might receive in the

future, he adopts a wait-and-see approach. He keeps his desires subservient to the laws of nature, rather than trying to subordinate the laws of nature to his desires. Patience is thus a completely positive action, and not a passive or negative reaction.

### **Turning your Enemy into your Friend**

The Quran tells us: Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend. (41:34)

This Quranic verse tells us about one of nature's secrets—and that is that inside every human 'enemy' there is a friend, and that we should discover this hidden potential friend. Once we do this, a veritable miracle will occur. The person who earlier appeared to us as our inveterate foe will turn into our close friend.

The fact is that enmity is not something natural or intrinsic. Rather, it is an artificial reaction. Whenever, for whatever reason, someone appears to become your enemy, you should not react in the same hostile way towards him. Rather, you must respond by trying to behave in a good, kindly way with him, even if you have to do this one-sidedly and despite the hostile behaviour of your imaginary foe.

This unilateral good behaviour on your part will dampen

your opponent's negative emotions. It will kindle the flame of humanity that slumbers deep in his heart. It will make him a new person, or, in the Quran's words, your 'dearest friend'.

The truth is that every human being is born with a common nature. Our common human nature is what unites 'enemies' and 'friends'. This means that you share the same basic human nature as your supposed enemy. That is why, despite your grievances, you must search for this commonality between you and your opponent.

Hope from others what you hope from yourself.

### **A Result of our Own Actions**

The Quran tells us: Whatever misfortune befalls you is of your own doing (42:30)

This Quranic verse describes a fundamental fact—that this world is based on the principle of causality. As the cause is, so the result will be. This verse teaches us that whenever we face any misfortune, we should discover its cause inside our own selves, and not start searching for it outside ourselves.

If a person realizes this fundamental truth and remains deeply aware of it, he will never blame others for his woes and start inflicting violence on them. Instead, the only thing that he will do is to engage in an unconditional survey of his own life. He will discover his own mistakes, so that by rectifying them he can save himself from further

problems. To blame others for one's problems is like a sick man blaming his neighbour for his illness and then going about fighting with him.

Suppose in a certain town the traffic rules require you to keep to the right. Now, if you start driving on the left you are bound to have an accident. Some car or the other is bound to collide with yours.

On the face of it, it would seem that this accident was caused by another car crashing into yours. But you certainly would not have the right to claim that it was not you, but, rather, the driver of the other car, who was at fault, and that it was he who banged into your car and injured you! You will have to admit that the fault was yours—because you were driving on the wrong side of the road—and that it was not the mistake of the other person, who was driving on the right side.

The same principle holds true in all aspects of our lives. Whenever you face any loss or misfortune in life, you ought to know in advance that whatever has transpired is because of your own wrongdoings. This is the right way to deal with life. If you think in this way, you will reform yourself and save your future. But if, on the contrary, you go about blaming others for your woes, you will only ruin your future. And, as for your past and your present—well, they have already been ruined!

## **Anger is a Weakness**

The Quran refers to truthful people as those who ‘forgive when they are angry’ (42:37). This does not mean only to forgive and forget. Rather, it means rising above the psyche of anger and then behaving accordingly. It means thinking in a manner free from anger despite being driven to anger. It means to respond to a situation without being affected by anger.

Anger is a weakness, while not getting angry is a strength in its own right. If a person does not get angry, he can manage every situation. He can turn every matter in his favour. Anger destroys one’s intelligence. An angry person can neither properly understand the situation he is confronted with, nor respond to it in an appropriate manner. He is immediately drawn to violence, although violence is not the solution to any problem at all. In contrast, a person who can keep his anger under control will search for a peaceful solution—and a peaceful solution is the only certain solution to every problem.

A treasure-trove of enormous capacities is hidden inside the human mind. If a person does not get angry, he is able to use these amazing treasures that are contained in his mind in his own favour. But when a person becomes angry, being in a disturbed state of mind, he is not able to use his mental capacities. Not get angry is a great victory, while getting angry is a great defeat.

## **Remaining Patiently Steadfast on the Truth**

The Quran tells us about people who save themselves from loss. Such people, it relates, ‘exhort one another to truth’ and ‘exhort one another to endurance’. (103:3)

Whenever someone is firmly established on the path of Truth or invites others to the Truth, it always happens that many people become his opponents. He has to face considerable opposition. At this juncture, what he has to do is to adopt the method of patience. He must withstand the difficulties he is faced with, and not try to blame others for them.

Patience is another name for a non-aggressive method. This means that a person who is on the path of Truth must not respond to violence with counter-violence. He must unilaterally abide by peaceful means. Patience is another name for this response.

Truth and violence cannot go together. If you want to be faithful to the Truth, you have to leave violence aside. Violence remains violence, whatever justification may be offered for it, and every form of violence is equally destructive. No seemingly wonderful or alluring excuse or pretext can absolve violence of its destructive consequences.

To engage in violence in the name of the Truth is itself a negation of the Truth. Those who engage in violence in the

name of the Truth clearly indicate that they are not on the path of the Truth. A lover of the Truth can never be a lover of violence. Conversely, a lover of violence most certainly is not a lover of Truth, even if he believes himself to be Truth's most ardent champion.

### **The Price of Peace**

Everything has a price. You can acquire a particular thing only when you are ready to pay for it. In this world, you simply cannot get what you want without paying the appropriate price for it. This is true of peace as well. Peace, too, has its price. An individual or group can obtain peace only after paying the price. What is the price of peace? It is to tolerate loss.

This fundamental truth is narrated in the Quran in the following words: We shall certainly test you with fear and hunger, and loss of property, lives and crops. Give good news to those who endure with fortitude. Those who say, when afflicted with a calamity, 'We belong to God and to Him we shall return,' are the ones who will have blessings and mercy from their Lord: it is they who are on the right path! (2:155-56)

This Quranic verse tells us about a basic fact of life. And that is that according to the law on the basis of which this world has been created, it is necessary that people will face different kinds of loss. Sometimes, they will face

challenges from others. At other times, they may face economic problems or loss of power. Sometimes, they may face some accident or the other. At other times, they may be denied certain benefits that they consider to be their due. And so on.

Every person undergoes such unpleasant experiences at some time or the other in her or his life. This is entirely in accordance with the law of nature. In such a situation, if people do not tolerate their losses, it will easily result in violence. But if they accept and tolerate their losses, it will enable them to live in peace.

To patiently face and tolerate loss is not tantamount to being defeated. Rather, this stance requires great courage and boldness. It is to voluntarily accept reality. It is to remain aware that even though one may have suffered some loss, one still has many resources left, on the basis of which one can rebuild one's life.

By abiding by patience and tolerance in the face of loss, one saves oneself from losing one's balance. Despite being temporarily unsuccessful, one is able to preserve the ability to see things in a balanced way. One is able to survey matters realistically and make new life plans. Forgetting what one has lost, one is able to carry on with one's purpose in life on the basis of what one still has. One acts with wisdom, not hopelessness, and once again picks up one's life and journeys ahead.



In life, a new day dawns after every night. This world is full of potentials and possibilities. Here, if you lose one opportunity, you can find another one. If you miss one step, another step leads to a new door which opens up to you. In this way, it always remains possible that if a certain plan fails, you can always make a new plan to carry on with building your life.

The fact of the matter is that in this world, bad news always comes along with good news. Every accident silently gives us the good news that we must not be frustrated and bitter, and that, instead, mustering our courage, we should search for new opportunities. If we respond in this positive way, nature itself gives us the good news that our loss is not permanent. It tells us that we can very soon rebuild our lives—and in a better way than before. It conveys to us that very soon we will discover that what seems to be our defeat is actually a source of guidance for us.

People who refuse to tolerate loss fall prey to negative thinking and so make their lives into an enormous burden. In doing so, they themselves become a burden on others. On the other hand, people who respond to loss with patience and courage can construct a new mansion on the ruins of the past. They can search for and discover a new dawn after a dark night, in the light of which they can carry on with their life's journey unimpeded.

## **Accepting Offers of Peace**

The aggression of the Quraysh of Makkah had led to a state of war between them and the Muslims. Among the Quranic commandments that were revealed at this juncture was this one:

Then if they should be inclined to make peace, make peace with them, and put your trust in God. Surely, it is He who is All-Hearing and All-Knowing. Should they seek to deceive you, God is enough for you. (8:61-62)

From this Quranic verse we learn that, according to Islam, peace is desirable to the maximum possible extent, so much so that if establishing peace entails a risk, then, too, it must be accepted. If in the course of war the opposing party makes an offer of reconciliation, it must be accepted without delay. Even if there is some doubt that this offer of reconciliation might involve some sort of hidden deception, reconciliation should still be made with the opposing party, based on the confidence that God is always with those who love peace, and not with those who engage in deception.

From this we also learn that in this world, the people who work to establish peace are always those who possess great courage. People and groups always have problems with each other. There will always be issues about rights being trampled upon and injustices being committed. In such a

context, those who can establish peace are the ones who can rise above other considerations to focus on peace at all costs, and who will not accept any pretext for engaging in violence. Only such brave people can establish peace in the world. Those who lack this courage can only engage in constant conflict. They can do absolutely nothing as far as establishing peace is concerned.

### **Greater Provision**

The Quran explains a fact of life in the following words: Do not regard with envy the worldly benefits We have given some of them, for with these We seek only to test them. The provision of your Lord is better and more lasting. (20:131)

There are two ways you can lead your life. One way is to make the material world your target or objective and to seek your success in worldly acquisition and power. There are always differences between people as far as these things are concerned. People constantly fight with each other over these material things. And that is why materialistically-minded people always feel that their rights have been trampled upon by others and that they have suffered deprivation. These emotions are repeatedly expressed in the form of jealousy, revenge and violence.

Another way of leading your life is to focus on your achievements. A person who lives in this way is content

with himself. He seeks whatever he wants within himself, and this saves him from resenting or hating others and inflicting violence on them. He obtains the sustenance of the Lord—which means that he has acquired the firm faith that he has found the Truth, that he has discovered that the existence that God has bestowed on him is far more valuable than all the treasures of gold and silver. He lives with such an awakened mind that the entire cosmos becomes for him an intellectual and spiritual feast.

A person who receives the sustenance of the Lord in this way has risen so high that things such as power and wealth appear to him to be very paltry. His mindset automatically makes him a lover of peace. He comes to regard hatred and violence as so utterly meaningless that he simply has no time at all to hate or to make plans of inflicting violence on anyone. Why would someone who has gained an invaluable treasure run after paltry baubles?

### **Peace, The Means for Security**

The Quran relates that the Prophet Shu‘ayb was addressed by his people thus: They replied, ‘Shu‘ayb, we do not understand much of what you say. In fact, we see that you are powerless among us. Were it not for your clan, we would have stoned you, for you are not strong against us.’ (11:91)

This verse refers to the protection provided by members

of the Prophet Shu‘ayb’s clan, who, despite not being true believers, protected him on the basis of tribal custom. This same phenomenon is expressed in a hadith according to which God has sent every prophet along with the protecting power of his community. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 10903)

In ancient times, long before the rise of modern forms of governance, people were protected by fellow members of their respective tribes. According to tribal custom and tradition, it was the duty of the tribe to protect its members against other tribes. In those days, this served as a protecting power for the prophets, too. Thus, the Prophet Muhammad received such protection from Abu Talib, head of the Banu Hashim clan. Even though Abu Talib did not accept Islam, in accordance with tribal tradition he continued to protect the Prophet from his opponents. (see, Ibn Hisham, *As-sirah Nabawiyyah*, vol. 1, p. 164)

In the present age, the tribal system has, of course, disappeared. But the role of protective power that it once performed is now played by the secular system based on the modern conception of the state. This system now provides believers, including those engaged in introducing Islam to the world, with the same kind of protection. The modern secular state gives all its citizens the guarantee that they can follow, preach, and propagate the religion of their choice. No one can obstruct them from doing so, provided, of course, they do not engage in violence.

The protective shield that guarded the prophets in the past

was based on the tribal system. It was a tribal protection mechanism, not a specifically Islamic one. Yet, despite this, the prophets accepted it. Likewise, in today's world, the protection that Muslims enjoy is a secular one, and not a specifically Islamic one. Following the practice of the prophets, Muslims should accept this protective framework and engage peacefully in introducing Islam to the world. However, Muslim 'leaders' of the entire world branded secularism as 'irreligiousness' (*la-deeniyat*) and unleashed a verbal as well as physical war against it. In this way, they unnecessarily turned into enemies of secularism. Thereby, they left unused the valuable protection that the secular system provided them.

### **Mercy for Humanity**

Addressing the Prophet Muhammad, God says in the Quran: We have sent you forth as a mercy to all mankind. (21:107)

The advent of the Prophet was an expression of God's mercy for the whole of humankind. Through the Prophet, God informed us about the principles on the basis of which human beings can come to inhabit what the Quran refers to as *daar-us-salaam* or 'home of peace' (10:25), an abode of peace and security for its inhabitants. Through him, God sent down teachings that can establish peace in human society. The Prophet presented humankind with a

complete ideology of peace. He provided us with a formula that can enable us to abstain from hatred and violence and lead a healthy life. He ushered in a revolution that made it possible for humanity to avoid confrontation and war and nurture a peaceful society.

Because of certain compelling circumstances, the Prophet had to fight some battles, but these were so minor that they might be more appropriately called skirmishes, rather than wars. The Prophet gave peace the status of a complete and comprehensive way of life. He taught us that violence leads to destruction, while peace leads to construction. He cited patience as the highest form of worship, which means remaining firmly on the path of peace. He called strife, the disrupting of the peaceful system of nature, the biggest crime. He gave such importance to peace that he equated the killing of a single individual with the slaying of the whole of humankind.

The Prophet taught us to greet each other with the greeting *Assalamu Alaikum* or 'May peace be upon you!' This means that our relationships with each other should be based on peace and security. He taught us that success in the Hereafter is the real goal of human activity and struggle in this world. In this way, he uprooted the false belief that the purpose of our life is worldly progress, which is the basis of all forms of confrontation and violence. He gave humanity this beautiful formula: Become someone who

benefits others. And if you cannot benefit others, then at least become harmless as far as they are concerned. He taught us not to consider anyone as our enemy. From him we learnt that if we behave in a good way with our opponents, we will realize that there is a potential friend hidden deep within every person we think of as our foe.

### ***Jihad, A Peaceful Activity***

Mulla Ali Qari was a famous Islamic scholar and jurisprudent. He was born in Herat, which is now in Afghanistan, and died in Makkah in 1606. He was the author of a number of books on various Islamic subjects. One of these books is *Mirqat ul-Masabih*, which is a commentary on a Hadith collection.

In the chapter on jihad in this book, Mulla Ali Qari writes that the word ‘*jihad*’ literally denotes struggle and effort. He then goes on to add that at a later time, which is to say after the Prophet’s demise, ‘*jihad*’ began being used to refer to war against the disbelievers. (Mulla Ali al Qari, *Mirqat al-Mafatih sharh Mishkat*, Vol. 6, p. 2452)

Every word has both a literal as well as a conventional meaning, one that relates to how the word is normally used and understood. This is the case with the word ‘*jihad*’, too. The word ‘*jihad*’ comes from the root juhd or jahd. The literal connotation of this is exertion with much effort. The word ‘*jihad*’ is conventionally used for various sorts of



exertion or struggle, one of which is war. However, it is used only for a particular and exceptional sort of war, one which is fought in the cause of God (*fi sabil Allah*). A war that is pursued for wealth and power will not be called a *jihad*.

The Quran uses two different words in this regard: *jihad* and *qital*. Where the reference is to peaceful struggle or exertion, the Quran uses the word *jihad*. For instance, in 25:52, the Quran refers to a peaceful jihad through the Quran, meaning the peaceful effort to introduce Islam to others. And when the reference is to physical war the Quran uses the word *qital*, as for instance, in verse 121 of the third chapter of the Quran. But in the later period, after the demise of the Prophet, the word '*jihad*' began to be used often as synonymous with *qital*, or war. However, even if this usage of the term '*jihad*' is regarded as proper, still it would be only an expanded usage of the term. In terms of the actual or essential meaning of the word, *jihad* is a term for a peaceful action, not a violent one. It is undertaken to transform people intellectually and spiritually, not to kill them.

### **Peace at all Costs**

The Prophet Muhammad was a great lover of peace. His opponents repeatedly wanted to embroil him in war, but he avoided it and stayed away from fighting with them.

However, on a few occasions, in the face of the one-sided aggression of his opponents, he was forced to engage in defensive battles, which were of a temporary nature. One of these defensive battles was the Battle of Badr.

At the very moment when the two armies faced each other at Badr, an angel of God came to the Prophet. The angel told the Prophet that God had sent him a message of salam or peace. Hearing this, the Prophet replied that God is Peace, peace is from Him and to Him is peace. (Ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya*, Vol. 3, p. 327)

From this incident we learn that, even at the time of war, the Prophet remained a peace-loving person. Even at this moment of great emergency, his mind did not come to be filled with hatred and violence. Rather, even at this time he continued to think in terms of peace and security. At this moment, too, his heart was heaving with the hope that, with God's help, he could establish an atmosphere of peace and security in the world. A true person is he who, even during war, thinks of peace, and who, even during battle, harbours the hope of peace and security in his heart.

This is no ordinary matter. Rather, it is an exalted model of positive thinking. War is the most negative of all negative things. The Prophet here stands at the edge of war but on his lips are words, not of bloodshed and violence, but, rather, of peace and security. This undoubtedly reflects a very lofty character, that of one who, even in the face of violence, thinks of peace, and who in the midst of war makes plans for reconciliation.

## God's Name is Peace

The Quran tells us various names (or attributes) of God. One of these is *As-Salam*, i.e. 'The Source of Peace'. This means that God is the epitome of peace. God loves peace and security so much that He has as one of His names *As-Salam*. The noted scholar Al-Khattabi writes that God is that Being from (Al Khatabi, *Shan ul Dua*, p. 41) Whom all people are safe and secure, and from Whom they experience peace, not violence.

When God's dealings with human beings are based on peace and security, human beings should deal in the same way with each other, too. That is to say, we should relate with each other with peace and security, and not with harshness and violence.

## Who is Strong?

According to a hadith report, the Prophet said that a strong person is not one who defeats others in wrestling, but, rather, only he who when angry, keeps his *nafs*, or lower self, under control. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6114; *Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2609-a)

To be able to suppress one's anger while in an overwrought state is a sign of self-control. And, self-control is, undoubtedly, the greatest power. In moments of anger, self-control saves one from wrong actions. One who is lacking in self-control will burst out uncontrollably when

he is angry, so much so that he can easily become violent. To keep one's anger under control is the way of a peace-loving person, while letting oneself get out of control when angry is the way of a person who glorifies violence.

Suppose two people have a fight and one of them hurls the other to the ground. This may signify only that the former is physically stronger than the latter. However, physical strength is a very limited sort of power. In contrast, someone who is angry but is able to control his anger and behaves in a balanced way with the person who provokes him to become angry is much stronger than the person who is only physically strong. His behaviour proves that he possesses the power of intelligence, which is undoubtedly much more powerful than physical strength. Such a person can, because of his wise planning, win every battle without physically harming anyone.

### **The Formula for Social Peace**

What is the ideal formula for social peace? How can social equilibrium be established? In this regard, a hadith gives us some valuable clues.

According to this report, the Prophet said that *fitna*, or strife, is asleep, and that God's curse is upon one who wakes up a sleeping *fitna*. (*Kanz al Ummal*, Hadith No. 30891) Self-restraint in this case is a natural formula for social peace.

The fact of the matter is that within every human being there is a deeply-rooted egotism. And this egotism is such that if it is provoked, it very quickly explodes and sets off violence. However, nature has arranged for this egotism to be asleep within every person's breast. It is present within everyone, but, in accordance with the system of Creation, it is in a somnolent state. Under such conditions, a simple way to establish a peaceful society is to let the egotism that is fast asleep inside people's breasts remain as it is.

It is only those whose egotism has been provoked who go about disrupting social peace. If one abstains from provoking other people's egotism, social peace will not be ruptured. From this, we learn that establishing social peace is within our own control, rather than this being dependent on others. Through your positive behaviour you can avoid provoking other people's egos, and then you will certainly remain protected from their wrath.

### **Salvation in Silence**

There are a number of traditions of the Prophet on the importance of silence. According to one tradition, the Prophet said that one who keeps silent has attained salvation. (*Sunan At Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2501; *Sunan Al Darmi*, Hadith No. 2755; *Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 6481)

This does not mean that people should stop speaking and become totally silent. Rather, what it actually means is

that one should become silent and think and only then should one speak. We should properly train ourselves and develop the habit of speaking less and keeping silent more, and of speaking only after we have properly thought about what we are going to say. This we can do by developing the habit of consciously engaging in this practice in our ordinary, everyday conversations. If we can develop this habit in our everyday conversations, then we will respond in the same way when we are faced with extraordinary or challenging situations.

Ordinarily, what most people do is that when they are faced with a situation, they react immediately and unthinkingly, blurting out whatever comes to their mind at that moment. This is not at all a proper way to react. Rather, one must first think, and, only after that, begin to speak. If you respond in this way, you can save yourself from having to later repent about what you had said, because once you say something, you can never take it back.

It generally happens that when one is faced with an unfavourable situation, one flares up and speaks in an unpleasant manner. A simple way to save oneself from this is to develop in one's daily conversations the habit of first thinking and only then speaking. Once you become used to thinking and only then speaking in ordinary, day-to-day conversations, then, because of this habit, you will do just the same when you are confronted with difficult situations. Your habit of controlling yourself in ordinary, everyday

conversations will enable you to speak in the same way, keeping yourself under control and speaking with mental discipline in emergency situations, too.

Much of the chaos and conflict in this world has to do with words. Some words provoke hatred and violence. Other words nourish a climate of peace and humaneness. If people could only do this one thing—making the correct choice of words while speaking, and then keeping their emotions under control—most conflicts and strife would die even before they were born.

To be able to keep oneself under control while speaking is a very great thing. Only those people who keep examining themselves and constantly keep a check on their words and deeds possess this lofty attribute.

When you hear something, you should not answer or react immediately. Instead, you should pause for a while, ponder on what you have heard, and think of what your ideal response should be. This will guarantee that you reply in a proper manner to what you have heard. Instead of reacting to stones with stones, you will find yourself responding with flowers, and thereby you will achieve success!

### **Do not Confront the Enemy**

In a hadith recorded in the *Sahih al-Bukhari*, the Prophet is said to have remarked that one should not desire confrontation with one's enemy, and that one should ask for peace from God. (*Sahih al Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2966)

This means that if someone becomes hostile towards you, you should not respond with hostility and begin fighting them. Rather, despite this person's enmity, we should seek to avoid quarreling with him. Even though he treats us as his enemy, we should try to avoid fighting with him.

When, in this hadith report, the Prophet tells us to ask God for peace, it means that we should adopt the path of peace, rather than confrontation, and that along with our peace-loving efforts we should seek succour from God. Your plea to God should not be for the destruction of the enemy. Rather, you should ask, 'O God! Bless me so that, despite people's enmity, I do not take to the path of violence and confrontation, but, instead, that I carry on with the journey of my life walking on the path of peace.'

From this we learn that according to the law of nature, peace is the general rule, while violence is an exception. We also learn that if a person or group appears to be one's enemy, confrontation is not the only way to respond. A better and more effective way is to solve the problem of an enemy through peaceful actions. The power of peace is both more effective and beneficial than the power of violence.

### **The Method of Non-Violence**

According to a hadith report, the Prophet said that God grants to non-violence what he does not grant to violence. (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2593; *Sunan Abu Dawud*, Hadith No 4807) This is a way of expressing a law of nature that



God has established in this world. On the basis of this law, if you behave in a gentle, non-violent way, your work will be more effective. But if you are harsh and violent, you will not succeed, and your efforts will fail.

Whenever someone adopts the harsh and violent way, his efforts are unnecessarily divided on two fronts: on his own inner development, on the one hand, and on fighting his external enemies, on the other. In contrast, if someone is gentle and non-violent, it becomes possible for him to focus all his energies on just one front: on his inner development. Consequently, he will be much more successful.

The above-mentioned hadith tells us about this basic law of nature on the basis of which the entire system of this world functions. Whatever one obtains in this world is what one gets by behaving in accordance with this system, rather than in violation of, this system. This system of nature is based completely on the principles of peace and non-violence. That is why whenever you obtain something in this world, it is by these principles of peace and non-violence. By deviating from them, you can be sure that you will get nothing at all.

### **The Limits of Dissension**

A hadith report relates that the Prophet declared that the best jihad is to speak a word of truth and justice in

front of an oppressive ruler. (*Sunan At Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2174; *Sunan Abu Dawud*, hadith No. 4344; *Sunan Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 4011) The Prophet is also said to have declared that a person who sees something in his ruler that he does not like should exercise patience with regard to that matter. (*Al Bukhari*, Hadith No. 7143; *Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 1849) Likewise, in a hadith contained in the *Sahih Muslim*, the Prophet is said to have declared that one should listen to one's ruler and obey him, even if he whips one on one's back and seizes one's wealth. (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 1847)

These hadith reports appear to provide two different commandments. On the one hand, we are told that if we see something wrong with our rulers, we should openly announce it. On the other hand, we are also told that if we see something wrong with our rulers, we should exercise patience in that regard and that even if he oppresses us, we should tolerate it.

These prescriptions clearly indicate the distinction between announcing something, on the one hand, and taking action on it, on the other. It is a desirable thing that if you see something wrong with your rulers, you should announce it in the form of exhortation and well-wishing. But as far as taking practical steps as a reaction are concerned, one should completely abstain from them. One must distinguish between the politics of exhortation and that of confrontation. Using the legitimate right

of exhortation, one should completely stay away from political confrontation.

It is very important to keep this distinction in mind. Whenever people launch movements to practically confront their rulers and make plans to oust them from power in the name of 'reform', it inevitably creates a violent atmosphere in society. However, if people abstain from such politics of conflict and remain satisfied just with verbal exhortation, peace will always prevail and society will not degenerate into a jungle of violence.

### **Peaceful Means are Better**

A hadith recorded in the *Sahih al-Bukhari* sheds light on a very important Islamic teaching. According to this tradition, whenever the Prophet had to choose between two methods with regard to any matter, he would always choose the easier one. (*Sahih Al Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3560; *Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2327; *Abu Dawud*, Hadith No. 4785; *Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 1984; *Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 24549)

If you view this choice of the easier option in the context of violent versus peaceful methods, it would be true to say that whenever the Prophet was faced with any issue, he chose peaceful, and not violent, methods to deal with it. This is because violent methods are definitely difficult, while peaceful methods are certainly easy.

However, this is not simply a matter of ease versus difficulty. Rather, it means that peaceful methods are always efficacious, while violent methods are always ineffective. Instead of solving a given problem, violent methods only further exacerbate it and make it seem even more complicated. In this regard, we learn from the hadith referred to above that a more difficult method is one that makes it more difficult to achieve one's goal. In contrast, an easier method makes attaining one's goal easier.

### **Flexibility, Not Rigidity**

A hadith report likens a true worshipper of God, to a soft plant, which, whenever it is faced with a gust of wind, bends accordingly. And when the gust dies down, the plant once again stands up. (*Al Bukhari*, Hadith No. 5644; *Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2810; *Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 15769) In this way, it saves itself from troubles and difficulties.

According to this hadith, there are two ways to face a storm. One way is to be rigid when faced with it. The other way is to be flexible. Another way of putting this is to say that one way of reacting is the violent way, while the other is the peaceful way. God wants us to abstain from the former and to choose the latter.

Those who try to react to a storm by adopting the method of rigidity only show by this that they are victims of extreme

egotism. In contrast, the path of peace is based on modesty. In this world, those who let their egotism dictate their behaviour are bound to face destruction, while success is for those who adopt the path of modesty. This is expressed in the form of a hadith, according to which the Prophet said that God will raise high those who behave modestly. (*Musnad Al-Shihab*, Hadith No 335)

### **Peaceful Citizens**

Explaining who a true believer is, the Prophet is said to have remarked, so we learn from a hadith report, that people's blood and wealth are safe from such a person. (*Sunan At Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2627)

There are two ways of living in society. You can live peacefully with others, or you can choose to keep quarreling with them. The hadith referred to here indicates that the way of a true believer is to live along with others as a peaceful citizen. Such a person lives without creating any problem at all for other people's lives, property and honour. Under no conditions whatsoever does he engage in violence.

What way of life can protect the members of society from one another's excesses? It is to maintain a balanced attitude even when one has cause for complaint. A person should contain his grievances within himself and refrain from pouring the fire of his resentment onto others. One should

abstain from venting one's ire and other negative emotions on others. In a society that consists of people who are like this, every individual will feel safe at the hands of everyone else. This peaceful society is an ideal human society.

### **Waiting is also a Solution**

Awaiting the bounteous abundance of God is an excellent form of worship. (*Sunan At Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 3571)

Every individual and group repeatedly faces difficult situations. On such occasions, people, whether consciously or otherwise, take this difficulty to be a permanent condition, and so they immediately begin to fight against it. But this sort of fighting always proves to be futile. Its only outcome is that it adds some more difficulties to an already difficult situation.

No difficult situation lasts forever. It is always temporary. And so, the only easy solution to a difficulty is to adopt a policy of waiting. That is to say, one should not unnecessarily start fighting against a difficult situation. Instead, one should simply adopt a 'wait-and-see' policy. As a result of this policy, you will save yourself from losing your peace of mind, and whatever has to happen will happen in its own time.

When people are faced with a problem, they generally look for an instant solution. This is the basic problem. If, instead, one adopts a wait-and-see approach, the problem will no longer remain a problem at all.

## Divine Warning, Not Human Oppression

According to a hadith, the Prophet is said to have predicted with regard to the Muslim *ummah* that that soon people would summon one another against them just as when eating, people call others to share their meal. (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, Hadith No. 4297)

Events show that this prediction came true in the second half of the 18th century with the emergence of European colonialism. The Europeans later began being joined by other communities. And this process is continuing till today. The question is: Why did this happen?

A study of the Quran reveals that this happened directly in accordance with the practice, or *sunnat*, of God. God's *sunnat* in this regard is that He sends warnings to communities or peoples to wake them up. This is a sort of shock treatment to jolt people and make them reform themselves. As God says in the Quran:

When the affliction decreed by Us befell them,  
they did not humble themselves, but rather their  
hearts hardened, for Satan had made all their  
doings seem fair to them. (6:43)

This Quranic verse mentions a common human tendency—of dressing up a bad deed in beautiful-sounding words so that its wrongness is concealed. This is exactly what has happened with Muslims in present times. Present-day Muslim leaders have, consciously or otherwise, done exactly what this Quranic verse describes.

The difficulties that Muslims have faced in modern times

in their relations with other communities were divine warnings. Muslim leaders, however, began to present these problems in terms of oppression and conspiracy. These events should have prompted Muslims to recognize their own shortcomings and devote themselves to internal reform. Instead, owing to the misguided approach of their leaders, their entire attention became focused on other communities.

What should have awakened a spirit of self-examination instead gave rise to a tendency to blame and scrutinize others. This attitude gradually intensified until it ultimately led to violence.

### **The Power of Silence**

Umar Farooq, the second Muslim Caliph, is said to have remarked, 'Destroy falsehood (*batil*) by keeping silent about it.' (see, Abu Nuaym Al Asbahani, *Hilyatul Awliya Wa Tabaqatul Asfiya*, vol. 1, p. 55)

According to the law of nature, truth is destined to live and falsehood is doomed to die. And so, to put an end to falsehood, it is enough just to keep silent about it. To talk about it or to demonstrate against it is only to give it life. To ignore falsehood and to remain silent on it causes its death. Remaining silent on falsehood simply means to ignore it. It means not to express any reaction to it in any way whatsoever. It means not protesting against it. Only those



who have realized how the laws of nature function in this matter can respond to falsehood in this way. Those who are bereft of this realization agitate against falsehood, and, in doing so, become a cause for giving it life.

### **Violence, A Result of Frustration**

Violence is a result of a sense of being deprived, while peace is a result of a sense of attainment or achievement. People who think they have been deprived or robbed of something of theirs by others always remain immersed in negative thinking. This feeling is often expressed in the form of violence. On the other hand, those who feel that they have achieved something in life experience peace of mind. They always lead peaceful lives.

Individuals and groups that hate others, sometimes going to the extent of inflicting violence on them, prove by their actions that they feel that they have been deprived. In contrast, individuals and groups who live peacefully prove by their actions that they have achieved what they wanted to in life.

What is the reason that some people feel deprived? And, who are those others who always live with a sense of achievement or attainment?

The greatest attainment in life is to find God, while the greatest deprivation is to fail to find Him. If you have found God, nothing else remains for you to find. On the other

hand, those who fail to find God suffer the maximum possible deprivation, and then nothing can cure them of their sense of deprivation.

### **Positive Status Quoism**

No sooner do you want to do something than you find yourself faced with some hurdle or the other. This happens in the case of individuals as well as entire communities. Now, one way to react to this is to first fight against these hurdles in order to try to get rid of them and then to begin whatever work one wants to. This is what is conventionally called '*radicalism*'.

Radicalism seems to appeal to certain highly emotional people, people with a proclivity to extremism. Yet, it is not useful for any sort of positive purpose. Radicalism is effective only for destruction, not for construction. Radicalism not only causes the destruction of an existing system, but it also leads to the destruction of social traditions that have evolved over centuries. People are subjected to unspeakable horrors because of the bloodshed and disruption wrought by radicalism. Experience shows that although it may appear attractive at the ideological level to some people, in terms of its practical consequences, radicalism has nothing positive about it at all.

Another way to respond to the challenges one inevitably faces in life is to totally avoid confrontation with a given situation, and, instead, to plan one's efforts remaining

within the limits of possibilities. Accepting for the time being the given status quo, one can use the opportunities that are still available to them. This method may be termed ‘positive status quo.’

Radicalism always produces violence. In contrast, ‘positive status quoism’ fulfills its purpose while preserving social peace. Radicalism always only further exacerbates a given problem. Conversely, ‘positive status quoism’ fulfills its purpose without creating any problems in society. The former leads to destruction, the latter to construction.

The method of reform that the Prophet Muhammad used in ancient Arabia was that of ‘positive status quoism’. For instance, at that time, there were 360 idols inside the Kabah. This was a big problem. But in the early Quranic revelations no order was revealed to purify the Kabah of these idols. Instead, in this initial period the Quran’s exhortation to believers was to ‘purify your garments’ (74:4). This meant purification of one’s moral character, and that of others, too.

## **No Justification for Violence**

Violence is against human nature. It murders humanity. It is the most heinous of all crimes. Yet, despite this, why do some people still engage in violence? The reason is very simple: Such people fabricate a justification for violence, and then they begin actually to believe that their violence is justified.

But the fact is that every single justification or pretext that is offered for violence is false. Whenever an individual or group engages in violence, it also has, at the very same time, the possibility of choosing non-violent or peaceful methods. Yet, in such a situation, they still chooses violence. Why? When the opportunity exists to act without violence, why do some individuals or groups choose to act violently?

Violence should be abandoned completely and peace should be accepted completely. One should never resort to violence under any pretext whatsoever. No matter what the conditions are, one must necessarily remain firmly wedded to peaceful methods.

## **Solving Enmities**

People often think of certain communities as their enemies. And then, on the basis of this imaginary perception, they start fighting against them, supposedly to save themselves from the consequences of their enmity. This imaginary enemy of theirs is, however, wholly false. And so are those actions which they engage in to counter this so-called enemy's imagined threat.

Enmity is not a constant aspect of human existence, unlike, say, the fingers of one's hands. It is just a superficial aspect. Through positive actions, every enmity can be ended. It is like a bit of dirt that stains a glass. This bit of dirt can

easily be removed—by simply washing it off with some water. A bit of dirt on a glass is not a problem in itself. The problem is created when you do not have clean water to wash it off.

It takes two hands to clap; one hand alone cannot produce a clap. In the same way, enmity is sustained by both sides. If someone regards you as an enemy, you can choose not to regard him in the same way. By refusing to respond with hostility, you deprive his enmity of the response it needs to continue.

The most effective way to end enmity is not to become the enemy of someone who considers you his enemy. This is a law of nature, and the laws of nature do not change.

THOUGHTS  
WORTH  
CONSIDERING

## HAJR JAMEEL

(GRACEFUL AVOIDANCE)

**I**n chapter 73 of the Quran, a command is given in the following words: And patiently endure what they say, and avoid them politely (73:10)

Several Urdu translators have translated this verse as follows:

1. **Shah Abdul Qadir:**

*Aur sehta reh jo kehte rahein, aur chhor un ko bhali tarah ka chhorna.*

And bear patiently what they say, and leave them in a dignified manner.

2. **Ashraf Ali Thanvi:**

*Aur yeh log jo baatein karte hain, un par sabr karo, aur khoobsurti ke saath un se alag ho jao.*

And be patient over what they say, and part from them in a beautiful manner.

3. **Amin Ahsan Islahi:**

*Aur yeh log jo kuchh kehte hain, us par sabr kar, aur un ko khoobsurti se nazar-andaz kar.*

And bear with patience what they say, and turn away from them with grace.

The English translation of the verse would be:

Endure patiently whatever they say, and decently avoid them.

This verse was revealed during the Makkan period. At that time, the polytheists of Makkah held power. They believed that the Prophet and his companions had strayed from their ancestral religion. As a result, they began to persecute the Prophet and his followers, subjecting them to all kinds of suffering. It was in this environment that this Quranic verse was revealed. In it, God commanded them to be patient and to adopt the method of *hajr jameel*.

The literal meaning of *hajr jameel* is to part in a beautiful way. This means that persecutors should be dealt with through graceful avoidance. The response to them should not be negative, but instead, involve positive conduct. One should overlook their actions and, in response to their harshness, adopt a better and more gracious manner.

Commentators generally state that the command of patience and *hajr jameel* was abrogated after the revelation of the verses related to combat. However, this is an incorrect interpretation. *Hajr jameel* (graceful avoidance) is not an act of helplessness; it is a positive attitude of the believer. In reality, a believer cannot afford to react



negatively. The psychology of complaint destroys the spirit of gratitude. Therefore, a believer actively eliminates feelings of complaint to protect the spirit of gratitude within. Similarly, the psychology of hatred destroys the spirit of love. That is why a believer prevents feelings of hatred from growing so that the love of God remains fully intact. Sometimes, this must be done firmly, and other times with wise planning.

*Hajr jameel* (graceful avoidance) might appear to be aimed at others, but actually, it relates to the self. A believer works hard to keep the higher Islamic values alive within. Under no circumstances should there be any internal weakening. According to the Quran, God has not placed two hearts within any human being (Quran, 33:4). That is, two opposing emotions cannot develop in the heart at the same time. A heart that harbours hatred for people cannot, at the same time, be filled with love for God. A heart filled with complaints against others can never be overwhelmed with gratitude toward God. A chest that has become a jungle of revengeful feelings cannot experience the sweetness of seeking forgiveness from God. A person who lives in memories of oppression cannot experience the remembrance of the Merciful and Compassionate God.

The truth is that patience and gracious avoidance serve as a form of self-protection for the believer. It's a way to prevent non-believing tendencies from developing in one's heart. Therefore, whenever such a situation occurs,

a believer affirms: ‘I cannot allow this kind of negative thinking to take root within me.’

To clarify this matter further, some practical examples of gracious avoidance from the lives of the Prophet and his companions will now be shared.

### **1. A Subtle Example of Graceful Avoidance**

It is narrated by Ibn Ishaq that the Quraysh of Makkah used to mock and abuse the Prophet. They stopped calling him by his name Muhammad, which means “the praised one,” and instead referred to him as “*Mudhammam*,” which means “the condemned one.” According to the narration, the Prophet said:

Are you not amazed at how God has turned away from me the harm of Quraysh? They abuse and slander Mudhammam, while I am Muhammad.  
(*Sirah Ibn Hisham*, Volume 2, page 6)

This statement by the Prophet can be understood as follows: if the Quraysh were to say that “Mudhammam is insane,” the Prophet would not take offense and would instead reply, “Your words refer to someone named Mudhammam. My name is Muhammad.” This is a subtle example of graceful avoidance. In this way, a believer protects himself from harm by preventing someone’s abuse from causing negative emotions. The believer’s stance is: I cannot afford to carry negative emotions inside me.

A similarly graceful example can be found in the life of

Dr. Zakir Husain, the former president of India. Once, while driving on a street in Delhi, his car lightly bumped into another vehicle and received a dent. The other driver stopped and approached him angrily. Dr. Zakir Husain also stopped and stepped out of his car. The man looked at him with anger and said, “Idiot.” The meaning of this English word is “fool.” Dr. Zakir Husain did not respond with anger. Instead, ignoring the insult, he calmly said:

Sir, I am not Mr Idiot; I am Zakir Husain.

Hearing this, the man’s anger subsided. He quietly said, “Sorry,” then got into his car and drove away.

## **2. The Treaty of Hdaybiyyah: Wisdom in Submission**

After the migration, the incident at Hdaybiyyah occurred. The leaders of Makkah prevented the Prophet and his followers from entering the city. At Hdaybiyyah, a peace treaty was drafted between the two sides. During negotiations, the Quraysh showed both stubbornness and aggression. They demanded that the agreement be based on their one-sided terms. This caused significant distress among the companions. To them, agreeing to such terms seemed like an act of humiliation. At that moment, the Prophet said:

Whatever terms the Quraysh suggest today, as long as they include kindness to kin, I will certainly accept them. (*Sirah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 3, p. 358)

Accepting the enemy’s one-sided conditions was very unpleasant. But by saying this, the Prophet transformed a

bitter situation into one that could be accepted with dignity. This statement by the Prophet is a wise example of tactful avoidance. Among the ancient Arabs, maintaining family ties was considered a core human value, while breaking those ties was viewed very negatively. Therefore, it was clear that the Quraysh would not include any clause in the treaty that involved breaking family ties.

In reality, the Prophet wanted to convey that he would seek peace with the Quraysh at any cost. As a respectful way to express this, he stated that he would accept any peace offer from the Quraysh, as long as it did not involve breaking family ties. It was already known ahead of time that they would never include such a condition.

### **3. A Wise Example of Graceful Avoidance**

When the Prophet migrated from Makkah to Madinah, most of Madinah's residents soon embraced Islam. At that time, there was a man in Madinah named Abdullah bin Ubayy, who was a prominent leader of his era. Although he had accepted Islam along with his tribe, he often made provocative remarks against the Prophet. The Prophet once mentioned this matter to a Muslim from Madinah named Usaid bin Huzayr. In response, he said:

O Messenger of God, be gentle with him. By God, God has brought you to us, and his people were already stringing pearls to place a crown on his head, intending to make him their king. He

now feels that you have taken away his leadership.  
*(Sirah Ibn Hisham, Vol. 3, p. 336)*

This example shows wise and graceful avoidance. One way to handle Abdullah bin Ubayy's provocations could have been with strictness. But the companion's response showed that harshness wasn't needed. Graceful avoidance was enough to settle the matter.

#### **4. A Hidden Layer of Grace**

The earlier examples of graceful avoidance are those that appear directly in words. Now consider an example that lies between the lines. When graceful avoidance is used in any situation, there is often an unspoken element involved. Although not verbally expressed, it remains present as a key part of the action. One example of this is the Treaty of *Hudaybiyyah*.

At Hudaybiyyah, the Prophet stayed for two weeks. During this time, the Quraysh committed several acts of excess. For example, they isolated and killed a companion with an arrow. On another occasion, while the Prophet was leading congregational prayer with his companions, some members of the Quraysh arrived and started shooting arrows at them.

Despite such provocations, the Prophet entered into a ten-year peace treaty with the Quraysh. The terms of the treaty were deeply unpleasant to Umar ibn al-Khattab. He went to Abu Bakr and said:

O Abu Bakr, isn't he the Messenger of God? He replied: Yes. Umar asked: Are we not believers in God? He answered: Yes. Umar inquired: Are they not non-believers in God? He responded: Yes. Then why should we accept humiliation in our religion? (*Sirah Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 3, p. 320)

According to narrations, Umar voiced the same concerns directly to the Prophet. What warrants reflection here is that the Prophet, despite the excesses of the Quraysh, agreed to a peace treaty with one-sided terms. This was based on an important Islamic wisdom: to create a moderate environment through a peace agreement so that the message of Islam could proceed effectively.

This wisdom, however, was not included in the peace treaty, nor was it announced publicly at Hudaibiyyah, even despite Umar's dissatisfaction and that of other companions.

This is the second aspect of graceful avoidance—one that always stays hidden. It can't be fully conveyed in words. If it were expressed openly, its true meaning would be lost.

In such situations, people have only two correct options. Either they should be wise enough to understand the meaning between the lines without it being openly stated, or, if they lack that awareness, they should trust in their leader's insight. They should, based on trust and goodwill, believe that what their leader has said is surely rooted in deep wisdom. Our responsibility is to follow our leader, not to question his honesty.

## 5. The Strategic Wisdom Behind the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah

The Treaty of Hdaybiyyah seemed, on the surface, to be a peace agreement made under pressure from the enemy. However, it held an unspoken goal, which was to avoid conflict and allow time for constructive growth. If this had been stated explicitly in the agreement or if the Prophet had announced it to his companions at that time, the purpose of the treaty would have been completely lost.

Such objectives are always pursued without openly declaring them, not with explicit declarations. Therefore, the Prophet remained silent. It was only later, when the practical results became clear, that people realized the great wisdom hidden within the treaty. This is the very truth that Abu Bakr al-Siddiq expressed later in these words.

There was no victory greater in Islam than the victory of Hdaybiyyah. But on the day of the agreement, people failed to understand what was happening between Muhammad and his Lord. Human beings are impulsive, and God is not impulsive like humans. He allows matters to develop to the point He intends. (*Maghazi al-Waqidi*, Vol. 2, p. 610)

## 6. Hajr Jameel as a Principle of Purposeful Conduct

Graceful avoidance (*hajr jameel*) is not just a way of protecting oneself. It is a deliberate, thoughtful, and consistent moral stance of someone with purpose. A person with purpose

has a clear destination in mind, and achieving that goal is his top priority.

Because of this, he distances himself from all distractions along the way so he can reach his final destination without any hindrances. As everyone knows, the people of ancient Makkah caused great suffering to the Prophet. They persecuted him and his companions to such an extent that he was forced to leave Makkah with them. Even after this migration, they kept their aggression.

Eventually, the time arrived when the Prophet, with God's help, became the conqueror of Makkah. This was a moment when, according to the customs of the time, it would have been entirely justifiable to punish those responsible for past oppression. However, the Prophet chose to follow the path of *hajr jameel*.

History shows that after the conquest of Makkah, when these Quraysh offenders appeared before the Prophet, he asked them: What do you think I will do with you? They replied: You are a noble brother and the son of a noble brother.

The Prophet then said: I will tell you what Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) said to his brothers: No blame shall be upon you today (Quran 12:92). He then declared: Go, all of you are free.

In this way, he granted freedom to all those who had previously been his declared enemies. This action by the Prophet was a prime example of purposeful leadership. His



goal was to purify the House of God from idols and lead the people of Makkah away from polytheism and toward the worship of the one true God.

By turning hostile individuals into friendly ones, he laid the groundwork for the revolution he was sent to initiate. The Prophet's one-sided kindness led all the people of Makkah to embrace Islam. The narrator states:

They appeared as if they had risen from their graves, then embraced Islam. (*Al-Sunan al-Kubra* by al-Bayhaqi, Hadith No. 18275-18276)

If, on the other hand, the Prophet had taken revenge for their earlier cruelty, a cycle of retaliation would have started. One act of revenge would have triggered another, and the situation would have become so negative that the entire constructive mission would have fallen apart.

## **Reactive versus Reflective Response**

When someone encounters something that conflicts with their temperament, there are two possible responses: an emotional reaction or a non-emotional reaction. An emotional response is precisely what, in medical terms, is called an allergy. Allergy is defined as: an abnormal reaction to normal things.

For example, becoming angry when hearing criticism is like having an allergy. If someone criticizes you, the natural

and moderate response is to listen with an open mind and reflect on it calmly. If the criticism is incorrect, you should respond with reason; if it is valid, then you should accept it clearly.

By contrast, becoming upset on hearing criticism is an unbalanced and unnatural response. The first reaction shows a troubled mindset, while the second indicates a healthy one.

Similarly, becoming upset when hearing an opposing slogan, reacting angrily to disrespect, feeling frustrated by obstacles, or being unable to accept ideas different from your own are all examples of emotional reactions. People with these tendencies often remain stuck in hatred and violence against others. They fail to recognize the positive and constructive side of life.

On the other hand, the second approach involves a non-emotional reaction. This is what the Quran calls *hajr jameel*—graceful avoidance. It means that when something happens against your temperament, you should stay calm, think it through with a clear mind, and respond with careful and deliberate reasoning.

There are different ways to respond moderately. One way might be to simply ignore it. In everyday language, this is expressed by the saying: dogs bark, but the elephant keeps walking.

At times, *Hajr Jameel* may take the form of responding to the misconduct of an opposing group with good conduct, and countering its low moral behaviour with a higher moral standard. In this way, the other party may be morally overcome. At other times, circumstances may require the use of pressure tactics to compel it to remain silent.

There is no fixed or single form of *hajr jameel*. Its form will vary depending on the situation. However, whatever form is chosen must be based on careful planning, not impulsive reactions. Its main purpose is to disengage, not to escalate. It will always be rooted in the principle of peace, not violence. It will never be motivated by hatred or revenge, but solely by the desire to handle the matter wisely so that life can return to its normal and intended course.

The goal of *hajr jameel* is not to focus on external problems but on the individual's own self. Its aim is not to completely eliminate the issue but to stop it from becoming a personal attack against oneself.

## FROM WAR TO PEACE

In two instances in the Quran, a verse commands fighting to eliminate *fitnah*: “And fight them until there is no more *fitnah*” (2:193; 8:39).

In this context, *fitnah* refers to religious persecution. Through this verse, the Prophet and his Companions were instructed to dismantle the existing system of religious coercion so that an environment of religious freedom could be established. Those who wished to follow God’s religion would no longer face any restrictions.

It should be clarified that the opposing party of the Prophet was the one who initiated aggression (Quran 9:13). In doing so, they transformed the Prophet’s anti-*fitnah* operation into a defensive war. This verse issued the command for war with a clear and specific aim, which was the elimination of religious persecution.

It was not correct to use this verse to justify war for any other purpose. However, in later times, this happened. The command of *qital al-fitnah* (fighting against *fitnah*) was expanded and applied to other goals. In reality, this

was a departure from its original purpose. Nevertheless, it occurred—and in some form, it continues to this day.

1. The first deviation in this regard occurred during the second generation of the Prophet's Companions. Two notable figures are al-Husayn ibn Ali (d. 61 AH) and Abdullah ibn al-Zubayr (d. 73 AH). Both of them rebelled against the Umayyad ruler Yazid ibn Muawiyah. To justify their actions, they cited Yazid's oppression. In other words, they expanded the meaning of *qital al-fitnah*, which was originally meant for religious persecution, to also include political corruption.

This extension was clearly an error in independent reasoning (*ijtihad*). A clear proof of this is that the Prophet had explicitly commanded that, after him, no rebellion should be launched against rulers because of political corruption.

This is why, although many of the Companions were present during the wars of these two figures, they did not participate in them. Abdullah ibn Umar made it clear that these later wars were a deviation from the Quranic ruling on *qital al-fitnah*—fighting to end religious persecution—not an example of following it. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 7095).

2. The second major deviation on a larger scale began after the rightly guided caliphate and lasted nearly a thousand years. This deviation originated from Muslim

rulers. They distorted the meaning of fighting against *fitnah*, turning it into a goal of political expansion. They waged wars around the world to extend Muslim dominance.

This expansion of the command was also a deviation. The Quran gave the Muslim Ummah a universal mission in an ideological sense, which was to serve as witnesses over mankind by disseminating God's message, not by imposing political authority on people. The Prophet expressed this by saying, "God has sent me to all people, so convey my message on my behalf." (*Sirah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 2, p. 607)

From this perspective, the primary task of Muslims in later times was to convey God's message to humanity, not to engage in the pursuit of political power.

3. The third and most intense deviation took place in modern times. Some Muslim thinkers offered a so-called revolutionary interpretation of this Quranic verse. They artificially stretched the meaning of the verse to mean "fighting to implement Islamic laws." According to them, Muslims of every era are obligated to wage war against rulers to enforce Islamic rulings.

This expansion of *qital al-fitnah* was a harmful deviation. It falsely planted the idea in Muslims' minds that establishing an Islamic government everywhere is their religious obligation. As a result, violent acts claiming to be jihad began to proliferate. Some Muslims, armed with guns and

bombs, started attacking people worldwide. Others, who did not physically participate, were so captivated by this revolutionary concept that they could not summon the courage to publicly denounce it or declare it un-Islamic.

The entire 20th century became an example of non-Islam in the name of Islam. This had two dangerous consequences:

- First, Islam's reputation declined. Around the world, Islam was mistakenly seen as a religion of violence and hatred. An example of this was a widely-read article in a famous London newspaper titled: 'A Religion That Sanctions Violence.'
- Second, the valuable opportunities for Islam that had arisen in the modern world were left untapped. Instead, under the banner of a self-fashioned concept of *jihad*, Muslims persisted in harming themselves and neglected to convey Islam's life-giving message to the world.

In the 21st century, Muslims' top priority is to turn back to the correct path. Before pursuing any other goal, it is crucial to immediately and fully stop all violence carried out in the name of Islam. No excuse—no matter how serious—should be allowed to prevent this.

The true revival of Islam in our time begins right here. By eliminating the atmosphere of hatred and violence, Muslims can achieve everything. Without doing so, they will achieve nothing.

## **Peace for the Sake of Peace**

What is peace? Scholars usually define it as the absence of war. That is, when no war is happening, peace is said to exist. The lack of a state of war is seen as the state of peace.

Those engaged in militant conflict in pursuit of their rights reject this view. They contend that peace must be accompanied by justice, and that any peace devoid of justice is not genuine peace.

This second idea results from flawed thinking. Those who believe this will neither achieve peace nor justice. The truth is that peace means access to opportunities, not access to justice. Peace by itself does not grant anyone justice. What peace does is create moderate conditions in which one can find opportunities to attain justice or rights.

In today's world, when someone achieves something, it is through their own effort. The advantage of peace is that it creates favorable conditions for you, allowing you to plan effectively toward your goals.

Situations of war and violence hinder opportunities for action, while conditions of peace and reconciliation open all doors for action in a way that no door remains closed.

## **The Age of War is Over**

Pyrrhus was a king of ancient Greece. He was born in 319 BCE and died in 272 BCE. In 279 BCE, he fought a battle against the Romans. Pyrrhus won the battle, but when the fighting ended, his economy and his political and military



strength were completely destroyed. This event gave rise to the term Pyrrhic Victory, meaning a devastating victory. In ancient times, a Pyrrhic victory—or devastating triumph—was rare. But today, with advanced weaponry, every war becomes destructive. The only distinction between the victor and the vanquished is how their news is reported; in reality, their condition remains the same. Today, both the defeated and the victors suffer losses.

In today's world, war is tantamount to suicide; it can no longer serve as a means of achieving any positive objective. If a nation has been deprived of something, the proper response is patience, not war, for war would only compound its loss with humiliation. When peace is disturbed, the answer is not war but dialogue and negotiation.

An example of this can be seen in Pakistan's history. Pakistan was created in 1947, and at that time, Bangladesh was its eastern region. Later, circumstances evolved such that Bangladesh fully separated from Pakistan. Eventually, Pakistan chose to pursue realism and exercised patience during this territorial loss. If Pakistan had not taken this approach, it might have destroyed the rest of the country in an attempt to reclaim the lost territory. The outcome of war is that what remains is also lost; in effect, partial deprivation turns into total deprivation.

It is a fact that war is no longer an option for anyone. In today's conflicts, there are losses for both the loser and the winner. However, there is no need to despair about this. If the modern age has, on the one hand, made

war impossible, then on the other, it has brought about revolutionary changes that mean deprivation doesn't have to be final. Today, any individual or group—regardless of circumstances—can start anew and achieve even greater success than before. After a loss, one can discover new opportunities for success.

In today's world, communication has eliminated the distinction between small and large countries. The modern era of globalization has essentially made geographical boundaries meaningless. As a result, war is no longer a healthy or justified option. Today, war is not just conflict; it is a destructive event fueled by anger, hatred, and despair, rather than careful planning. War is now simply a reckless act of self-destruction, not a rational or constructive action.

## TRUE COMPANIONSHIP

It is widely understood that the esteemed status of the Companions of the Prophet in Islam was due to their close association with the Prophet. This point is, in itself, correct. However, it does not mean that companionship is some mysterious phenomenon, and that the Companions, through mere presence, automatically gained benefit from some unexplained effect. From a scholarly point of view, this explanation is not satisfactory, because it does not fully account for the facts. For example, it fails to explain why hundreds of other people in Madinah, who outwardly professed faith and repeatedly sat in the Prophet's company, derived no benefit from it and came to be known in Islamic history as hypocrites.

The truth is that there is only one way for a person to achieve a high level of faith—and that is *marifah*, or intellectual growth. After embracing faith, a process of reflection begins within the individual. It is this thinking process that, in reality, is the only path for a believer to reach higher stages of faith.

This very process of reflection used to continue in the company of the Prophet. People would listen to his words and absorb them in a way that stirred their minds. In this way, a continuous process of reflection would occur within them, morning and evening. The companionship of the Prophet was a means to this reflective process, and for that reason, it came to be called the companionship of the Prophet.

However, simply listening to the Prophet's words was not enough. His words only helped those who were receptive, who listened attentively, and could accept what was said without psychological barriers. This quality of receptivity was fully present in sincere believers, so they gained benefit from the Prophet's companionship. The hypocrites lacked this receptivity, so they did not benefit from being in his company, despite sitting with him.

The common definition of a Companion is:

“Whoever saw the Prophet in a state of faith and died in that state is a Companion.”

This definition is incomplete. In reality, to understand the meaning of companionship, one must look at how it was practically expressed during the Prophet's time. It was not the case that the Prophet sat silently while the Companions, after accepting faith, also sat quietly, just gazing at him. His companionship was always full of reflection and thought. In Quranic terms, it was a gathering in which wisdom was taught.

Historical accounts show, on the contrary, that companionship with the Prophet was a living and active experience. He would speak about the blessings of his Lord (Quran 93:11). He would inform those present about the divine provisions granted to him (Quran 20:131). He would explain the verses of the Quran. He would answer people's questions. He would say things that transformed doubt into certainty. He would teach words of remembrance, prayer, and gratitude. He would recite newly revealed parts of the Quran. He would narrate the deeply moving stories of previous prophets and past believers, and so on.

Those who sat in the company of the Prophet would hear deeply inspiring words. His presence nurtured intellectual awakening, and his companionship, in the truest sense, was a living companionship. This life-giving nature of his companionship was the true reason why the believing contemporaries of the Prophet were given such high status and came to be known in history as the *Companions of the Prophet*. This was an event of intellectual transformation, not merely passive sitting in a gathering.

The same is true for scholars and elders in later times. There is no mysterious power in anyone's company. The benefit of companionship depends entirely on how receptive those who listen are. Those who are receptive will gain benefit, and those who aren't will remain deprived.

Given this explanation, a more precise definition of a Companion would be:

“One who saw the Prophet in a state of faith, benefited from his companionship, and died in that state is a Companion.”

### **In the Prophet’s Company**

One example of the Prophet’s general companionship—something his companions often experienced in the mosque or other gatherings—is shown here. It illustrates how, during such gatherings, the Prophet’s companions found nourishment for their intellectual growth. Narrated by Abu Dharr:

The Messenger of God said, “How will you be when rulers after me start to take this public wealth (*fay’*) for themselves?”

I replied, “By the One who sent you with the truth, I will put my sword on my shoulder and fight until I meet you or join you.”

He said, “Shall I not tell you something better than that? Be patient until you meet me.” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 4759)

Through this statement, the Prophet gave his Companions a new perspective. Usually, when people see corruption among their leaders, they start confronting them aggressively in the name of political reform. The Prophet

taught that during times of corruption, it is better to practice patience than to oppose the leaders and risk martyrdom. This patience should be maintained until death.

In this hadith, patience does not mean inaction. Instead, it signifies a noble form of action: avoiding conflict with rulers and finding peaceful ways to accomplish one's goals, while staying committed to them. Political conflict always stems from impatience, whereas acting without confrontation is only achievable when a person masters their emotions and plans their actions calmly.

This was the deep wisdom that the Prophet taught his Companions. The Companions and the early generations of Muslims, known as the *Tabi'in* and the *Taba' Tabi'in*, understood its importance and adopted it wholeheartedly. As a result, during the early period, significant Islamic achievements occurred that would not have been possible without this patient political approach.

As is well known, immediately after the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, political corruption started. Muslim rulers strayed from the path set by the *Shariah*. If the believers of that time had taken a confrontational approach against their rulers, it would have led to the deaths of all the best individuals from the first and second generations. Those early historical figures would have been buried, and the great Islamic history that was later built through them would never have come into being.

For instance, members of this early generation, having distanced themselves from political conflict, focused their efforts on peaceful and intellectual engagement,

which contributed to the wider dissemination of Islamic teachings.

They carried out the monumental task of preserving and spreading the Quran even before the printing press—something unmatched among other revealed scriptures. They collected hundreds of thousands of hadiths, scrutinized them, and compiled collections of authentic hadiths, offering the world the valuable science of hadith. They achieved the great feat of compiling Islamic jurisprudence—something unparalleled in any other religion.

Similarly, it was the same early-generation individuals who, despite ignoring political corruption, compiled all the Islamic sciences: such as *sirah* (Prophetic biography), history, theology (*aqidah* and *kalam*), Arabic lexicons, grammar, morphology, rhetoric, and related fields. Thanks to the efforts of these early believers, Islam became, in every way, a preserved and trustworthy historical religion—something no other faith can claim.

All these achievements were only possible because the early Muslims, guided by the Prophet, adopted this wise approach: they rejected aggressive confrontation in the face of political corruption and instead actively and peacefully engaged in other non-confrontational fields of Islamic service.

## Extended Companionship

In chapter 26 of the Quran, God mentions the Prophet of Islam, stating that “He sees your movements among



those who prostrate themselves.” (26:219) In this verse, those who prostrate refer to the believers, and movements mean going back and forth. This alludes to the Prophet Muhammad’s daily activities, which he undertook to reform the believers and raise religious awareness among them. These efforts, in a broader sense, also constituted part of the Prophet’s companionship. Throughout these activities, he continually worked to increase the religious consciousness of the believers.

To understand the idea of extended companionship, here is an example:

Narrated by Abu Hurairah: A man insulted Abu Bakr while the Prophet was sitting. The Prophet watched in amazement and smiled. When the man continued and Abu Bakr responded to some of his words, the Prophet became angry and stood up. Abu Bakr followed him and said: “O Messenger of God, he was insulting me while you were sitting, and when I replied to some of what he said, you got angry and stood up?” He said: “An angel was with you, responding on your behalf. But when you responded with some of your own words, Satan became present, and I do not sit where Satan is present.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 9624)

This is a clear example of what we call conscious awakening taught by the Prophet. The truth is that every

human being is naturally equipped with two types of inner traits: the commanding self (*nafs al-ammarah*) and the reproaching self (*nafs al-lawwamah*). The commanding self is linked to Satan, while the reproaching self is linked to the angel.

If a man abuses you and you stay silent, then the accusing self within the abuser awakens and internally rebukes him. It's as if an angel responds on your behalf. Conversely, if you reply with harshness to harsh words, the commanding self of the other person is triggered. This person is falling under Satan's influence.

Through this instruction, the Prophet made the Companions aware of a profound truth. He instilled in them such intellectual enlightenment that it became the key to their success in every matter—whether personal or collective.

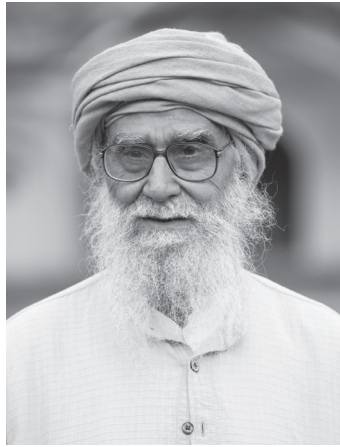
Through this guidance, the Prophet provided the believers with a deep insight. He explained that within every person, there are two hidden personalities:

- One, the enemy personality, and
- The other, the friendly personality.

It is within your power to choose whether the other person becomes your friend or your enemy. If you activate his commanding side (ego), you will encounter his enemy personality. If you activate his reproaching side (conscience), you will see his friendly personality.

Through this instruction, the Prophet highlighted this essential truth: even doing nothing is a form of doing, and not speaking is a form of speaking.

If someone abuses you and you choose not to respond, it doesn't just mean you stayed silent. It means that by remaining quiet, you allowed a more powerful speaker to speak—that is, God's angel. In this way, what you might have done less effectively, God's angel accomplished more effectively.



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 honoured 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.

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A living community cannot remain confined to approaches shaped by earlier circumstances. While it must honour its intellectual inheritance, it must also have the courage to think anew in the light of the Quran and Sunnah, so that their guidance may be meaningfully applied to contemporary conditions. This is the true spirit of ijtiḥād.

The tragedy of present-day Muslim society is that imitation has too often taken the place of reflection. As a result, Muslims have failed to understand changing circumstances and have remained largely unaware of the opportunities offered by the modern age. The need today is not to abandon the past, but to stand upon it and move forward.

Ijtiḥād is the effort to discover the guidance of Islam for new situations with wisdom, realism, and a peaceful approach. It teaches that criticism is not an enemy, but a means of growth. It opens the door to constructive action, respect for humanity, and the renewal of Islamic thought in every age. The present book is an attempt to understand this principle in relation to the modern age.

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