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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

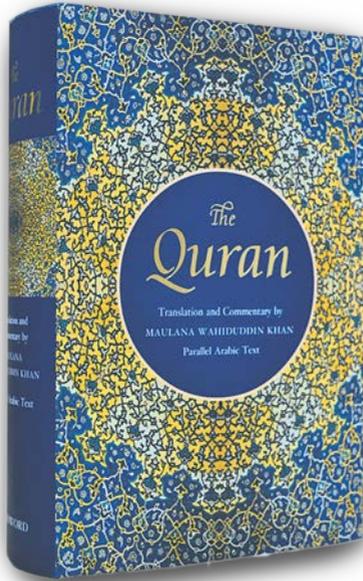


Patience is not inaction. Patience is the virtue needed for systematic, planned action.

The Quran

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY
MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN
PARALLEL ARABIC TEXT

This commentary on the Quran is a concise, easy-to-read guide that enables today's readers to understand the deeper meanings of the Quran and to reflect upon its relevance in the present world. It focuses on the main themes of the Quran, such as God-realization, enlightenment, closeness to God, remembrance, prayer, peace and spirituality. It lays stress on the fact that through reflection, deep thinking and contemplation, divine lessons can be learnt from the signs of God scattered across the world.



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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

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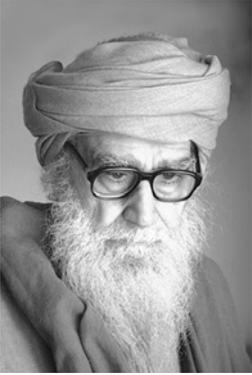
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CONTENTS

■ FROM MAULANA'S DESK	4
Now or Never	
■ QURAN: THE PRESERVED BOOK OF GOD	6
Words of God	
■ WAR AND PEACE IN ISLAM	8
In the Light of Quran and <i>Hadith</i>	
■ WORKING TOGETHER	13
Agree to Disagree	
■ TRADITIONAL VERSUS CREATIVE MINDSETS	15
Closed- and Open-Mindedness	
■ TWO TYPES OF PSYCHE	22
Differentiate Between Them	
■ FROM THE SPIRITUAL TREE	24
Call of the Judgement Day	
■ HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY	26
Human Duty	
■ HAPPINESS: OTHER NAME FOR CONTENTMENT	27
A State of Mind	
■ LIVING IN THE GREAT BLESSINGS OF GOD	29
Eternal Obligation	
■ THE CULTURE OF PEACE — Part V	31
Teachings of Islam	
■ PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	38
An Intellectual Process	
■ ASHES BEAR WITNESS	40
Deeds are Forever	
■ THE WORD OF GOD	42
From The Scriptures	
■ ASK MAULANA	44
Your Questions Answered	
Glossary	47

FROM MAULANA'S DESK



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, born in 1925, in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, is an Islamic spiritual scholar who is well-versed in both classical Islamic learning and modern disciplines. The mission of his life has been the establishment of worldwide peace. He has received the Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian honour in India, and the Demiurgus Peace International Award. He has been called 'Islam's spiritual ambassador to the world' and is recognised as one of its most influential Muslims¹. His books have been translated into sixteen languages and are part of university curricula in six countries. He is the founder of the Centre for Peace and Spirituality based in New Delhi.

NOW OR NEVER

I met an intelligent and educated young man who had developed a bad habit due to some reason. I advised him to get rid of the habit, saying: "This habit is constantly destroying your health, it has also halted your intellectual development. In all aspects, it is disastrous for you." I advised him to urgently do something to get rid of the habit. After a pause, he replied: "I will do it." I said: "No, you should say, 'I have done it'."

In life the principle that works is 'now or never'. We do not have time. 'I will do it' is a kind of luxury which we cannot afford. We have to take decisions at once. Every day is the last day for you, so you have to decide in the very first moment, otherwise you cannot do anything. Time is running fast, it does not wait for anyone.

**In life the principle that works is 'now or never'.
'I will do it' is a kind of luxury that we cannot afford.**

I told him that the mind has an enormous capacity. There are some windows in the mind. These windows open up only when man takes an urgent decision. For example, if in reality you come face to face with a cobra, you will react with great speed. The reason is that the fear of the

1. The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims 2012, Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre, Jordan.

cobra activates your mind and the result is that some of these closed windows of your mind open up instantly.

Every human mind has this potential, but generally people utilize this capacity of the mind only during moments of fear. A wise man is one who can utilize this opportunity for positive planning, and opens up the windows of his mind in normal circumstances. Fear even activates an animal. However, what differentiates a human being from an animal is that man should be able to activate the potentials in his mind without fear. □

Maulana Wahiddudin Khan
editor@thespiritofislam.org



Three Kind of Problems

*Problems are of three kinds.
If a problem is related to the present,
you can solve it through wise planning.*

*If the problem is related to the past,
then a simple solution is: forget it,
and the problem will
instantly disappear.*

*If the problem is regarding the future,
then it is not a problem at all,
it is simply a baseless fear.*



Re-plan to Succeed

*When you fail in your life, take it as a result of lack of planning.
So, in such situations, try to do re-planning and
you will certainly attain success.*

QURAN: THE PRESERVED BOOK OF GOD

Words of God

Today I have concluded for you your religion, and I have completed my blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion.

THE QURAN 5: 3

SOME people have taken this verse to mean that previous religions were incomplete, and that they were only made complete with the religion of the final Prophet of Islam, Mohammed. But this interpretation is mistaken. By 'conclusion of religion' in this verse is meant conclusion of the Book of God which had been revealed to Prophet Mohammed over a period of 23 years. This is the last verse of the Quran to be revealed and marks the completion of the Book of God in Arabic. The meaning of this verse is not that the religion which God had been sending down since the beginning of human history had gradually been developing and had now taken on its final and complete form. Instead, it is the revelatory completion of the Quran in Arabic that is referred to, not the evolutionary completion of divine religion as a whole.

The Quran was the only divine Scripture to bring about a revolution of such universal proportions that a large and strong community gathered in support of it and ensured that the Book of God was preserved in its original form.

There is, essentially, one Book of divine guidance. That Book has been called *Ummul Kitab* (The Essence of the Book) in the Quran. The divine scriptures were editions of this *Ummul Kitab*, revealed to the different Prophets. The difference between one Scripture and another is one of language and style. There is no question of one Scripture being complete and another incomplete.

After the final Prophet, however, the only way to salvation is by means of the Quran and Islam. Following previous scriptures and religions cannot earn one salvation, now. But there is only one reason for this: the fact that the Quran is preserved in its original form whereas other religious scriptures are not. The Quran still exists as it was

revealed, but previous Scriptures have been altered and are not now as they originally were. This difference between the Quran and other Scriptures is a historical fact that cannot be doubted on any academic grounds. Clearly, only that edition of the Book of God which exists in its original form will be a source of guidance and salvation for man. Scriptures which have been altered by man—which do not even exist in their original form or language—will never be able to provide man with guidance and salvation.

How was it that the Quran was preserved whereas previous Scriptures were not? The only reason for this is that in this world a powerful community is required to preserve the Book of God—a community which is able to ward off every threat to the integrity of the Scriptures. The Quran was the only divine Scripture to bring about a revolution of such universal proportions that a large community gathered around it—a community that was strong enough to ensure that the Book of God was preserved in its original form.

**The fact is that the Quran is preserved in its original form
whereas other religious scriptures are not.**

The scale of the revolution which the Quran brought about is unprecedented in human history. During the Prophet's lifetime Islam had spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula. Within one hundred years of the Prophet's death his followers had subdued most of the inhabited world. The enemies of monotheism were—on a universal level—either obliterated or vanquished.

Islam continued to dominate the world scene, until eventually man entered the age of the press. Now, there was no possibility of any changes or additions being made in the Book of God. The task of preservation of the Quran had been accomplished for all time. □



WAR AND PEACE IN ISLAM

In the Light of Quran and Hadith

AN accepted principle for evaluating a system or ideology is to differentiate between its declared principles, on one hand, and the actual practice of the people who claim to stand for or represent it, on the other. For example, let us consider that you want to evaluate the role of the United Nations which was formed in 1945. Every student of international politics knows that in order to understand the role of the UN, he/she has to study the Charter of the UN. It is this Charter which will serve as the authentic source of reference for understanding the UN. The student will not form his/her opinion about the UN by seeing the practices of the 193 member states of the UN. The value of the UN can be judged by its ideology rather than the practices of its member countries.

To understand Islam, one needs to study the Quran and *Sunnah*, rather than the actual behaviour of the people who claim to be its followers.

So, too, is the case with Islam. To understand what Islam really is, you need to study the authentic texts which contain its principles. These are the Quran and *Sunnah* (practice of the Prophet of Islam). There are more than one billion people in the world who claim to be Muslims. To understand Islam, one needs to study the Quran and *Sunnah*, rather than the actual behaviour of these people who claim to be its followers. The right method of studying Islam is to differentiate between Islam, on one hand, and Muslims, on the other. Muslims have to be judged in the light of Islamic teachings, and not vice versa.

The central Islamic teaching is the discovery of God and the understanding of God's creation plan for mankind. Prophets were sent by God with the mission to make man aware of this creation plan. The Quran clearly tells us that the mission of the Prophet is peaceful dissemination of the divine message.

[O Prophet] remind them: your task is only to remind,
you are not a master over them.

THE QURAN 88: 21

Following in the footsteps of the Prophet, the primary duty of believers is to continue this work of peacefully conveying the divine

message to mankind. It should be clearly understood that there is no Quranic verse that directs Muslims to establish 'Islamic rule'. This kind of commandment is alien to the Quranic scheme of things. Political rule is a relative part of Islam, whereas the peaceful dissemination of the divine message is an essential part of Islam. A relevant social teaching of Islam is reflected in this Quranic verse: *As-sulh khair* (THE QURAN 4: 128). That is, "Reconciliation is the best." According to this verse, Muslims must try to establish peaceful relations with others. They are not commanded to impose any system on others. If they try to impose any system, it would lead to conflict, and everything would be jeopardized.

As far as the socio-political system is concerned, there is no ideal model for it in Islam. It depends on the actual situation prevailing in any given period. The socio-political system emerges from within a given society, rather than being imposed from outside. Muslims must reconcile with such a system. They must accept the principle of status quo in this matter. They have been instructed not to precipitate problems. It is in the best interests of Muslims to establish peace between people, because peace leads to normalcy, and normalcy helps in availing opportunities for the real mission of Islam, which is the mission of inviting people onto God's path.

The central Islamic teaching is the discovery of God and the understanding of God's creation plan for mankind.

Islam does not permit Muslims to engage in war against anyone. Under normal circumstances, Muslims are exhorted to engage in peaceful communication of God's message and to abstain from a confrontational approach in all matters. The only exception to this is in the face of aggression by others. The Quran clearly mentions that there should be no war unless one is faced with aggression from another party. This means that in Islam there is only one legitimate form of war, and that is defensive war. Muslims have not been commanded to initiate war. Nor are they allowed to engage in wars of aggression. However, if another party begins war, then Muslims can engage in self-defence.

The Quran says:

And fight in God's cause against those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression—for surely, God does not love aggressors.

THE QURAN 2: 190

This verse clearly states that Islam allows only defensive war. Aggressive war is not permitted in Islam. No exception whatsoever is permissible in this regard. The Quran does contain some verses that refer to war. These pertain to those situations when Muslims were at war. One such verse is:

Fight those from among the People of the Book who believe
neither in God, nor in the Last Day, nor hold as unlawful what
God and His Messenger have declared to be unlawful, nor
follow the true religion, until they pay the tax
willingly and agree to submit.

THE QURAN 9: 29

**In Islam there is only one legitimate form of war,
and that is defensive war.**

It is important to note that this verse does not say that Muslims should wage war with "so and so". It only means that Muslims should fight in defence, against those who have waged war against them. This verse speaks of war against attackers: it is the only real reason to engage in war against them. Their being non-believers is not the reason to engage in war against them. The mention of non-believers here is not to indicate that their being non-believers is the reason for war. Rather, it is only to specify who they were. The reason for war was not that they were non-believers, but, rather, that they were attackers. This verse should, therefore, be understood in the light of the verse quoted earlier. i.e. THE QURAN 2: 190.

Another point to bear in mind is that the prophetic period of the Prophet of Islam lasted for twenty-three years. More than half this period was spent in Makkah. There were non-believers in Makkah then, but no verse was revealed to the Prophet commanding him to wage war against them. Had the justification to wage war with people been their being non-believers, the command for war would have been given earlier, when the Prophet was in Makkah itself. But a verse of this kind was revealed only after the Prophet's migration to Medina. This was because at that time, the opponents of Islam realized that Islam was flourishing on account of having found a strong base in Medina. It was then that they took to violent aggression. In the Makkan period, Muslims were merely considered a different religious sect by their opponents, but in the Medinan period they were taken as a grave threat. That is why in the Makkan period, the opponents of Islam were

only engaged in opposition, but when the Prophet migrated to Medina, these opponents launched armed military aggression against them. It was at this point in time that the following verse was revealed:

Permission to fight is given to those who are attacked,
because they have been oppressed.

THE QURAN 22: 39

In this verse, the word "oppression" (*zulm*) is meant in the sense of aggression. As is known, during the thirteen-year period of the Prophet's life as a prophet in Makkah, the opponents of Islam continuously subjected the Muslims to persecution. However, in this period, no commandment for war was revealed. Such a command was revealed only after the Prophet migrated to Medina, when the opponents of Islam embarked on military aggression against the Muslims. Therefore, in this verse "oppression" implies aggression, and not non-aggressive oppression.

The Quran clearly mentions that there should be no war unless one is faced with aggression from another party.

A related issue that needs clarification is that of *jizyah* or tribute. It must be noted that *jizyah* is not a permanent command of Islam. Instead, it was a temporary order. At that time it was common practice among governments to impose a levy like the *jizyah* as a temporary punitive tax on those who had waged an unprovoked war. This same practice was applied to the contemporary opponents of the Prophet. *Jizyah* was therefore a temporary tax imposed on those opponents of the Prophet who were his contemporaries. The Muslim rulers who tried to continue this practice of *jizyah* after the Prophet were not right. They have misinterpreted this verse of the Quran. (THE QURAN 9: 29). *Jizyah* is not at all applicable in the present age.

Yet another issue that needs clarification in this discussion about war and peace in Islam is a *Hadith* from al-Bukhari, which is translated as: "I have been ordered to fight the people till they say: '*La ilaha illallah*' ('There is no god but God'), and whoever said 'No god other than Allah' will save his property and his life from me."

In this *Hadith*, '*al-nas*', or 'people' refers to the people of Makkah. So, this *Hadith* must be interpreted only in the light of the actual conduct of the Prophet of Islam towards the people of Makkah. It is on record that

at the time when the Prophet victoriously entered Makkah in 630 CE, most of the Makkans were non-believers. They were brought before the Prophet while he was in the premises of the Kabah. The Prophet did not offer them these two choices: 'Convert to Islam or you shall be put to death.' On the contrary, he said to these Makkans: "*Iz-habu fa-antum al-tulaqa*" (Ibn Hisham). That is: 'Go, you all are free.' Although these people embraced the faith of Islam later on, their acceptance of Islam was completely by choice. It was not a matter of forced conversion. In the above *Hadith*, the words, "Till they say: '*La ilaha illallah*'" symbolically implies surrender, or the ending of war.

Following in the footsteps of the Prophet, the primary duty of the believers is to continue the work of peacefully conveying the divine message to mankind.

After the death of the Prophet, there were some wars between the Companions of the Prophet and the two adjacent empires—the Byzantine Empire and the Sassanid Empire. But, these wars were started as defensive wars by the Companions, because both these empires had exhibited clear aggression by killing the ambassador of the Muslim state and sending their armies at the borders of the territory of Arabia. This led to initiation of war by the two empires.

20th century Muslim leaders wanted to revive the Muslim *ummah*. However, their starting-point was wrong. They sought the revival of Muslim history of the later period, when Muslims had established empires. The right beginning for these leaders would have been to seek to revive the original method of the Prophet of Islam, which was communication of the message of God to mankind. But Muslim leaders did not begin their endeavours from this juncture. This was clearly an erroneous judgement on their part, and it led to widespread problems. It exhorted some Muslims to take to violence as a means to pursue their goals, resulting in the enormous tragedies that are unfolding all around us now. □



WORKING TOGETHER

Agree To Disagree

IN the days of the steam engine, the engine drivers had no option but to stand at close quarters to a blazing fire. It was all part of being an engine driver, and without that no train could have run. Much the same thing happens to individuals who make things work in civic life. They are confronted by the blazing fire of their own anger at other members of society.

They rage at wrongdoers, cheats and shirkers, both real and imagined. But just as the engine driver controls both the fire which drives the engine and his own desire to escape from it, so must the individual in society tame both his own fury and a desire to simply run away from adverse situations.

If a society is to hold together and function in harmony, individuals must learn to bear with those who oppose and hurt them. There is no group of people in which differences of opinion do not arise; no group in which there are never any feelings of grievance and resentment. It would, indeed, be unrealistic to expect that everything should be plain sailing.

**If a society is to hold together and function in harmony,
individuals must learn to bear with those who
oppose and hurt them.**

How then, can people live and work together? How, with seemingly irreconcilable differences between individuals, can society be welded into a cohesive whole? There is only one way: people must bury their differences and agree to disagree. But this is only possible if people react coolly and rationally in difficult situations where relations are strained and there seems no way out of the dilemma. It can happen only if people are fully aware of their responsibilities towards others, as individuals, and towards their community as a whole.

This may seem to be asking for the impossible. But it is not so. Every individual does these things in the most natural way within his own domestic circle. In quite normal families, differences of opinion occur almost every day, but the bonds of love and kinship prevail and

grievances are all finally buried. It is in this way that a family holds together. Every home is a practical example of people agreeing to disagree.

**There is only one way of living and working together:
people must bury their differences and agree to disagree.**

This spirit of give and take which is a matter of instinct in a family is something which can emerge in a community only through conscious effort on the part of its members. While it is an emotional bond that keeps families from disintegrating, it is a rational effort which cements society, constraining its members to hold together despite all differences. □



Human Weakness.

*People judge matters on
how they affect their own selves.*

*They are quick to support anything,
which improves their own position.*

*When something appears threatening
to their own position, they oppose it,
regardless of its intrinsic worth.*



Dedication is Key

*A dedicated person can do what an entire army may fail to do.
What is required is only the spirit of saying: 'I will do it'.*

TRADITIONAL VERSUS CREATIVE MINDSETS

Closed- and Open-Mindedness

HUMAN minds fall into two categories: Traditional or *taqlidi* (imitative of past precedent) and Creative or *ijtihadi* (creative reinterpretation). The former denotes a closed mind; the latter: its opposite, an open mind. The traditional mind attains a certain level and then stagnates, while the creative mind keeps travelling ahead, stopping only at death.

The traditional mind attains a certain level and then stagnates, while the creative mind keeps travelling ahead, stopping only at death.

The difference between traditional and creative mind-sets can be illustrated with the help of an example. Shakespeare was a famous English writer, and so was George Bernard Shaw, who was born some two hundred and fifty years after the former's death. Shaw's contribution to English literature was less than that of Shakespeare, and he himself admitted this when he said, 'I am smaller in stature than Shakespeare, but I stand upon his shoulders'. This is an example of a creative way of thinking, and a society characterised by such people constantly progresses in terms of creative thinking. Each new generation in such a society builds on the contributions of its predecessors, adds to them and then transmits its legacy to the generations that come after it.

But contemporary Muslim societies present a completely different picture. In modern times, their intellectual development has almost come to a standstill. This is because they have developed a traditional, as opposed to a creative way of thinking, and consider *ijtihad*—creative reinterpretation of religious concepts or the exercise of judgement with reasoning on such issues—to be almost a sin. Many Muslims mistakenly believe that in terms of scholarly study, the *ulema* of the past have already accomplished all that was possible to do, and that today our task is simply to study their books and strictly follow them.

This approach is a major hurdle in the path of our intellectual progress. In this regard, Muslims can adopt one of two positions: to recognise, as Shaw did with regard to Shakespeare, that their stature might be

less than that of the *ulema* of the past, but that, despite this, they are standing on the latter's shoulders; or to believe that because their stature is less than that of the *ulema* of the past, they must remain forever at the latter's feet.

The first of these two approaches represents a creative way of thinking, one conducive to constant intellectual development. In a society characterised by such an approach, each new generation fully respects those that went before it and, building, on the contributions of its predecessors, makes even more progress.

In a creative society, each new generation builds on the contributions of its predecessors, adds to them and then transmits its legacy to the generations that come after it.

In contrast, the second approach represents a traditional way of thinking, which stagnates Muslim thought, preventing it from moving in the direction of the constantly progressive stages of the higher level of thinking that Islam stands for. It also causes Muslims to fall behind other communities in the intellectual field, killing their intellectual faculties. This matter can be further elaborated with the help of some *Hadith* of the Prophet.

Respect for Humanity

Several narrators of *Hadith* have recorded that once, in Medina, when a procession carrying a dead body for burial passed by the Prophet, he stood up in deference on seeing it. When his companions who were with him pointed out to him that the deceased was a Jew, the Prophet simply remarked: "Was he not a human being?"

This incident is included in the *Hadith* collection of Imam Bukhari, who made an immense contribution to *Hadith* studies by collecting over 7000 reports that he considered authentic from several hundred thousand reports that had been attributed to the Prophet. He mentioned this *Hadith* in the chapter on burial in his *Sahih Bukhari*. Now, if we were to adopt a traditional approach and consider this *Hadith* as simply relating to burial, and nothing more, we will not be able to learn anything new from it and would simply go on parroting what the earlier commentators on *Hadith* have said about it. While we must respect the intellectual contributions of the earlier exegetes of *Hadith*, we cannot accept all

that they have written as gospel truth. Many *ulema* of the past have commented on this *Hadith*, offering various theories for the Prophet's action, with some claiming that this practice [of standing up when the funeral procession of a non-Muslim passed by] was later abrogated, or that the Prophet did so because he did not want the body of a Jew to be at a level higher than that of his head, and so on. Now, all these explanations are based on personal speculation and lack adequate proof. This *Hadith* very clearly indicates that the Prophet stood up out of respect for the dead man [and not for any of the reasons that these *Hadith* commentators had suggested]. In other words, this *Hadith* is not simply about burial, as those with a traditional mindset would imagine. Rather, it is a fine example of having respect for humankind, irrespective of religion, as those with a creative mind-set would be able to perceive. It could be offered as a counter to those who claim that while Islam preaches respect for fellow Muslims, it does not do so with regard to people of other faiths. This *Hadith*, if approached in a creative manner, can be presented as evidence of the Islamic principle that all human beings are worthy of respect, no matter their religion or community.

The *Hadith* in which the Prophet stood up when the funeral procession of a non-Muslim passed by, is a fine example of respect for humankind.

On the other hand, if this *Hadith* were approached in a traditional fashion and were interpreted in the same way as those traditionalist commentators referred to, this Islamic principle would be completely lost to posterity.

Practical Wisdom

According to a tradition also contained in the *Sahih Bukhari*, the Prophet told his wife, Aisha, that when the Quraysh rebuilt the Kabah they did not do so on its original foundation as laid down by the Prophet Abraham, but had chosen to erect it on a different site. Hearing this, Aisha asked the Prophet why he could not restructure the Kabah on its original foundation. To this the Prophet replied that the Quraysh were newcomers to the fold of Islam and it was possible that if he were to do so, it might cause them to agitate. He added that, had there been no danger of that happening, he would certainly have done what Aisha had suggested.

Imam Bukhari has included this *Hadith* in his chapter on Hajj. Now, if we were to consider the *Hadith* simply in this manner, reflecting a traditional approach, all that we would gain from it would be some information about the glories of Makkah. If, on the other hand, we adopted a creative approach to this *Hadith*, we would be able to have a new understanding of what may be called the wisdom of practical living. To leave the Kabah on the foundations laid down by the Quraysh, instead of reconstructing it on the foundation laid by the Prophet Abraham, might appear to have been incorrect. But, despite this, the Prophet chose not to reconstruct it in the latter way because, in the given circumstances, this would have posed additional problems.

Some Muslim leaders have sought to impose *Shariah* laws on society without first seeking to prepare society to willingly accept them, in total contrast to what the *Hadith* suggests is the right way.

From this practice of the Prophet we can derive the principle that, in life when sometimes faced with certain challenges, for the moment we should look not at what is right and what is wrong, but, instead, at what is possible and what is not.

Abiding by this principle is a key to succeeding in this world. In today's world, many of the failures of Muslims have been because they have not abided by this principle. They have not looked at problems or challenges from the point of view of what is possible and what is not, but have rather considered them only from the perspective of what is right and what is not. Accordingly, they have rushed into action, hoping to attain what they thought was ideal, although, in the given circumstances, achieving it was not actually possible. Many of the sacrifices that Muslims in modern times have made, but that have not borne any fruits, have been the result of disregarding the principle that this *Hadith* refers to. The major cause of this attitude is the traditional mind-set of the people

Gradualism in the Revelation of Islamic Commandments

According to another *Hadith* in the *Sahih Bukhari*, Aisha once mentioned that many of the earliest chapters of the Quran dealt with the subject of heaven and hell and that only after people's faith in Islam had become strong, were the verses dealing with issues that are

permissible (*halal*) and forbidden (*haram*) sent down. She added that had the commandments forbidding the consumption of alcohol and adultery been revealed in the beginning, instead of at a later stage, people would have refused to obey them.

Imam Bukhari has included this *Hadith* in his chapter on the compilation of the Quran. Now if, from a traditional perspective, we were to view this *Hadith* simply from the point of view of its being related to the compilation of the Quran, we would not be able to derive any other knowledge from it. On the other hand, by engaging in creativity and reflecting on the wider implications of this *Hadith*, going beyond its relevance to the question of the compilation of the Quran, we can discover that this *Hadith* suggests a very important Islamic principle—that with regard to the enforcement of the rules of the *Shariah*, a certain wisdom is required: it must be a gradual process, as it was in early Islamic times. In the beginning, peoples' faith was made firm so that they would be receptive to obeying Divine commands, and only then were various laws introduced.

If in a certain place conditions are inappropriate, one should shift to another place. If conflict is likely to prove useless, one should seek to achieve one's objectives through peaceful dialogue.

If the approach of present-day Islamic leaders is examined in the light of this particular *Hadith*, it appears that they have failed to appreciate its underlying, broader implications with regards to the process of establishing Islamic laws in society. In many Muslim countries today, a number of movements and groups are actively engaged in the enforcement of the *Shariah*, but despite their many sacrifices this has not happened anywhere, in the true sense of the term. This is because the faith of Muslims has weakened, and their intellectual and emotional commitment has declined, and this means that many of them are no longer willing to accept *Shariah* laws. Despite their fervent attempts to enforce *Shariah* laws, these Muslim leaders are lacking in the necessary creative approach and insight. They have rushed into the political realm armed with their traditional baggage, and have thus failed to achieve their objectives. They have sought to impose *Shariah* laws on a society without first seeking to prepare that very society to willingly accept them, in total contrast to what the *Hadith* suggests is the right way.

Change in Field of Activity

According to another *Hadith* contained in the *Sahih Bukhari*, the Prophet is said to have remarked that he had been instructed to proceed to another town, Medina, which people then referred to as Yathrib. Imam Bukhari has included this *Hadith* in his chapter on the glories of Medina. Now, those with a traditional approach will view this *Hadith* as providing information about the glories of Medina, and indeed this is what most exegetes of *Hadith* in the past have done. Some have even seen this *Hadith* as indicating that to refer to Medina as Yathrib is disapproved of (*makruh*). However, the Quran itself refers to Medina as Yathrib, and so this explanation of the *Hadith* is incorrect. But, if one goes beyond the blind imitation of the past exegetes and ponders on this *Hadith* from a creative perspective, one learns that it speaks about a very important Islamic principle—that of changing one's field or arena of action. This *Hadith* indicates that when conditions became extremely severe and harsh for Muslims in Makkah, God commanded the Prophet to shift from there to another town, Yathrib, where he and his followers would find a more propitious atmosphere, so much so that it would become a centre of Islam and people would start referring to it as the 'City of the Prophet' or *Madinat al-Rasul* or the 'City of Islam' or *Madinat al-Islam*.

The present generation needs an encyclopaedia of genuine *Hadith* traditions written in a creative style that would enable a proper understanding of them.

This principle of shifting one's arena of activity—if conditions so demand—which this *Hadith* refers to, is important for success in various matters. It indicates that if in a certain place conditions are inappropriate, one should shift to another place, or that if conflict is likely to prove useless, one should seek to achieve one's objectives through peaceful dialogue. Unfortunately, today's Muslim leaders, burdened by their traditional mentality, have not been able to appreciate and act on this wisdom, because of which they have themselves suffered considerable damage and loss. For instance, in several countries today, violent movements involving conflict in the name of Islam have resulted in Muslims having to suffer massive loss of life and property. Because of their traditional approach, the leaders of these movements have been unable to appreciate the underlying message of this *Hadith* of the Prophet. They would have been able to

understand the import of this *Hadith* if they had a creative approach. In that case, and in accordance with the principle enunciated by this *Hadith*, they would have abandoned the path of conflict and adopted peaceful means instead. Following that, in accordance with the law of nature, they would have succeeded.

From these above-mentioned examples it has been sought to clarify the distinction between the *taqlidi* (traditional) and *ijtihadi* (creative) approaches. The former stops at the initial stage and refuses to move ahead. In contrast, the latter proceeds through many stages, seeking a logical conclusion. The first step is the end in itself for those who abide by tradition, but for those inspired by and committed to creativity, it is a means, a path to the higher stages.

Stages of Studying the *Hadith*

The early scholars of *Hadith* made an immense contribution by collecting and compiling a vast number of traditions. This could be described as the first stage in the study of *Hadith*. In what could be called the second stage, the next generation of *Hadith* scholars prepared indices of *Hadith* in order to make the subject easier to understand. In the third stage of the development of the study of *Hadith*, the Companions of the Prophet and the two generations that succeeded them edited and compiled the commentaries on *Hadith*, thus preparing the necessary background material for a proper understanding of *Hadith*.

The fourth stage in the study of *Hadith* entails studying them in their particular temporal context in order to appreciate their broader meaning and implications. A sincere attempt at this has been made with regard to selected *Hadith* traditions dealt with above. The fifth stage in the study of *Hadith* could be to prepare an extensive encyclopaedia of all genuine *Hadith* traditions so as to enable people to properly understand them in a style with which they are familiar. These stages suggested in the study of *Hadith* are not categorical or final. Rather, these are offered simply for the purpose of indicating the differences between a traditional and a creative way of understanding, and to point out the benefits of the latter. □



TWO TYPES OF PSYCHE

Differentiate Between Them

EVERY person acts according to his psychological make-up. This is true for Muslims, too. All of a person's actions will reflect the psyche that has been developed in his personality. This psyche can be of two types. These two types can be explained briefly as:

'Islam is true' and 'I am true'.

There appears to be a difference of just one word in these two phrases. The first phrase contains the word 'Islam', while the second contains the word 'I'. But in this seemingly minor difference is hidden the entire story of the rise and fall of Muslims. When Muslims are on the right path, they perceive and know Islam to be true. But when they fall victim to degeneration, they think it is they themselves who are true. The first conception engenders the fear of God. The second promotes a false sense of superiority.

When Muslims are on the right path, they perceive and know Islam to be true. But when they fall victim to degeneration, they think it is they themselves who are true.

Islam is, without any doubt, the true religion. When someone realizes the truth of Islam, an enormous transformation takes place within him. He becomes the epitome of virtues. He develops a passionate commitment to communicate the message of Islam to everyone else.

Archimedes discovered only a law about water, and when that happened he was so overwhelmed that he rushed out naked from the bath, crying out '*Eureka! Eureka!*' (which in Greek, means 'I have found [it]!').

That being the case, if one were to discover the greatest truth about the universe, one can imagine what his condition would be!

The Islam that one discovers on the basis of God-realization is obtained directly from God. That is why a person whose Islam is of this sort is suffused with the attributes that emerge within someone who has seen and experienced God. He trembles on witnessing God's glory.

His awareness of God's perfection divests him of his tendency to defy God's will. In contrast, someone who receives Islam as an inheritance considers it as a matter of communal pride or ancestral prestige. As a result he develops a false sense of pride.

One who receives Islam, as an inheritance considers it as a matter of communal pride or ancestral prestige. As a result he develops a false sense of pride.

If sea-water evaporates, what is left is just salt. The case of Muslims is somewhat similar. If they lose the fear of God in their religion, what remains of it is only salt, which only makes the religion unpalatable to others. □



Focused Thinking

*If you take everything seriously without differentiation,
then your focus will be scattered.*

*Your time and energy will be wasted,
and you will not be able to
do anything valuable.*



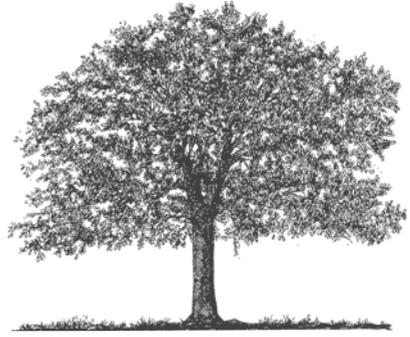
Scientific Temperament

*The scientist believes that reality is what
manifests itself outwardly and not
what exists in his own mind.*

*The scientific temperament negates
self-importance in a man and
makes him a realist.*

FROM THE SPIRITUAL TREE

There is a tree beside my house. I call it the 'Spiritual Tree'. I derive spiritual inspiration from it. A tree is an ever-growing being that was initially a seed possessing the potential of becoming a full-grown tree. A seed takes food from the universe around it and then grows into a tree. The same is true with spirituality, the desire for which is intrinsic to, and an integral part of, the very nature of, every human being. To realize this spirituality, Man must derive spiritual food from the universe around him. A tree converts carbon-dioxide into oxygen; a spiritual person is one who can take positive lessons from negative situations. From this perspective, a tree is an embodiment of a spiritual personality. — Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



CALL OF THE JUDGEMENT DAY

THE *duas* (supplications) that the Prophet has taught us are not some mysterious magical formulae which one utters to seek favours from God. These *duas* in reality are an expression of true submission to God. They are a result of deep contemplation and God-realization. They are a portrayal of the feelings of those who seek to live a God-oriented life; who derive spiritual lessons from all events and for whom the Hereafter is the ultimate goal.

Every evening is an illustration of the scenario after the first call of the Day of Judgement.

According to the Quran and *Hadith*, when the first clarion call of the Day of Judgement is sounded, all of mankind will fall unconscious. Following this, the second call will be a wake-up call when all mankind will gather in an assembly before the presence of God.

For a true believer, every evening is a likeness of the first call of the Day of Judgement. Every evening we witness the weary returning to their dwellings. The birds and the beasts also return to their homes. The sun

returns to the West from its eastern position. All creatures big and small return to their destinations. This same scenario on a much larger scale will be reenacted after the first call of the Day of Judgement. Everything will leave its temporary abode and return to its permanent abode.

Every night, a God-conscious person envisages this scenario of the Day of Judgement. Retiring to bed will appear symbolically as sleeping in one's grave. The silence of every home at night will appear like the silence of the graveyard. Now, we can understand the following *dua* of the Prophet:

Oh Lord! We have come to the evening in Your refuge, and we
see the morning in Your refuge, and we live with Your Name
and we die with Your Name, and we will return unto You.

After the night when the new morning dawns it has the likeness of the second call of the Day of Judgement. Every morning people awake from their slumber and start with their worldly pursuits. Some run towards their businesses; some are hurrying for their family. Others are scurrying after wealth and some running after political power. On the Day of Judgement when mankind is raised from their graves, there will be a similar scenario. Only, all will be running towards the assembly before God.

Every morning is an illustration of the scenario of the second call of the Day of Judgement.

When a believer wakes up in the morning and stands before God in prayer, he feels like he is standing before God with the record of his deeds. He glorifies God, praising Him and asking for His forgiveness. Now, we can understand the following *dua* of the Prophet:

All praise is for God, who gave us life after having
taken it from us, unto Him is the resurrection.

In this world, the system of day and night created by God is a lesson for us to understand the Hereafter. Here, every day we witness life and death. In the Hereafter we will live forever. Every evening therefore is an illustration of the scenario after the first call of the Day of Judgement. Every morning is an illustration of the scenario of the second call of the Day of Judgement. □

HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

Human Duty

The meaning of Human responsibility is actually human duty. Jesus Christ has said:

Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's
and to God the things that are God's.

Luke 20: 25

This same advice has been given by the Prophet of Islam in these words:

Give to the rulers what is due to them.
And ask your dues from God.

Sahih Bukhari

BOTH these sayings show us the right relationship between individual and society. A healthy relationship between an individual and society can only be established when the individual possesses the spirit of responsibility. When this is so, then the focus of the individual will be on his responsibility. The individual will so desire that he should fulfil the rights of society that are on him.

A healthy relationship between individual and society can only be established when the individual possesses the spirit of responsibility.

As to the rights of the individual, they are not achieved by demanding them, rather they must be achieved through personal effort by making use of the resources available. This spirit of responsibility is the guarantee that there is no conflict between society and the individual. The development of both society and the individual will then continue with these healthy efforts. □



Mature Mind

*Art of rejection is easy, which only a great mind can accept.
Acceptance is a phenomenon of maturity.*

HAPPINESS: OTHER NAME FOR CONTENTMENT

A State of Mind

HAPPINESS is the cherished goal of every human being. But, it is a fact that the majority of people fail to achieve happiness. They begin their day with unhappiness and end it with unhappiness. It is a sad aspect of almost every human being. So, what is the solution to this widespread problem?

This phenomenon can be explained by applying the well-known formula: 'It is in comparison that we understand'. Animals are also like human beings, but all animals live in happiness. The word "unhappiness" is not found in the dictionary of animals. What is the reason behind this difference? It is because animals always live in contentment. They are satisfied with whatever they get, be it more or less.

The secret of happiness is in contentment. If you are living in contentment, then you will be happy.

This phenomenon tells us that the secret of happiness is in contentment. If you are living in contentment, then you will be happy. But if you are discontent with what you have achieved, then you are bound to live in a state of unhappiness.

Studies show that there are two levels of achievement: one based on need and the second based on greed. As far as need is concerned, no one is deprived of it in this world. But, the pursuit of greed has no limit. No amount of achievement can satisfy one's greed. It is this nature of man that makes him unhappy.

Everyone should be very practical in this matter. Every person must differentiate between the achievable and the unachievable. Fulfilling one's need is achievable for anyone, but fulfilling greed is undoubtedly unachievable for everyone, even for a wealthy person possessing political power.

Trying to satiate one's greed is an unlimited phenomenon, but those items after which one becomes greedy are limited. Man by nature is

Mr Unlimited, but the world in which he lives is a limited world. It is this difference that leads to the phenomenon that is called unhappiness.

Both happiness and unhappiness are states of the mind. If you are aware of this fact, you will easily be able to manage your ambitions and instantly achieve happiness. Happiness is an internal phenomenon, it is not an external achievement.

Man is searching for happiness outside of him in the external world, although happiness lies within him, in his state of mind.

Acharya Rajneesh was an Indian mystic guru. He wrote a book with the title, *Kundalini Andar Base*. This title is based on a story of the musk deer. When it smells the odour of its musk, it runs here and there in search of the source of the fragrance, although it is actually coming from within itself. The same is true regarding happiness. Man searches for happiness outside of him, although happiness is inside him. Following the above expression, one can say: '*Happiness andar base*', or happiness dwells inside you.

Happiness is everyone's greatest desire, but everyone fails to achieve happiness. Why is this so? Because, man is searching for it outside of him in the external world, although happiness lies in his inner world, that is, his state of mind. Make your state of mind healthy and you will certainly attain happiness. □



Honeybee-Style Living

Live like a honeybee. Extract what is good for you and leave what is unwanted for you.

Do not waste your time in complaint and protest.

LIVING IN THE GREAT BLESSINGS OF GOD

Eternal Obligation

THE Quran refers to God's three special blessings for man in these words: "He created man out of a [mere] drop of sperm: yet he shows himself to be openly contentious! He has created cattle for you: from them you derive food and clothing and numerous other benefits; how pleasant they look when you bring them home in the evenings and when you take them out to pasture in the mornings. They carry your loads to places which you could otherwise not reach without great hardship—surely, your Lord is compassionate and merciful—He has created horses, mules and donkeys, so that you may ride them, and also so that they may be put on show, and He creates what you do not know." (16: 4-8)

Acknowledging divine blessings inculcates a positive personality in a person, and it is this positive personality that will be held deserving of being settled in Paradise.

These verses refer to three blessings which in the entire universe have only been given to man. Man should acknowledge these blessings and give the appropriate response to them. It is this response by a man that will be mainly responsible for gaining him a seat in Paradise. Acknowledging these divine blessings inculcates a positive personality in a person, and it is this positive personality that will be held deserving of being settled in Paradise.

The first blessing is that God created man and gave him a unique personality. This kind of personality is an exceptionally rare gift to man. Nothing in the universe shares this gift.

The second blessing is given here in terms of the modes of transport, or in other words, means of communication. This is a symbolic blessing. It refers to all those blessings which have been given to man in the form of the life-support system, both in the form of movable and immovable things.

The third blessing is mentioned in these words: "He creates what you do not know." This third blessing was referred to here as a prediction.

When in the seventh century the Quran was revealed this blessing had not come into existence, it was to appear in the future. This blessing is the industrial civilization which was present in nature in the potential sense at the time of the revelation of the Quran. After a long process of a thousand years this blessing became a reality and we now know it as the civilization produced by the industrial and scientific revolution.

Acknowledgment means deep appreciation of a gift. This kind of acknowledgment is the greatest human quality.

God Almighty is the giver of these blessings and man is the recipient. What is required of man is to consciously acknowledge these blessings, without any compulsion. Acknowledgment means deep appreciation of a gift. This kind of acknowledgment is the greatest human quality. It shapes the entire personality of a human being. It is this acknowledgment that makes a person a positive person.

The above Quranic verses call man to discover the bounties of God Almighty and respond to them with a great sense of acknowledgment. This will develop a high kind of personality in a person. It is this personality that will prove to be a deserving candidate for Paradise in the eternal life of Hereafter. □



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THE CULTURE OF PEACE — Part V

Teachings of Islam

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 every sort 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 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 Peace will return to Him.

An exalted person is one who even in the face of violence thinks of peace, and who in the midst of war makes plans for reconciliation.

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, he did not allow his mind 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 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 exalted character. An exalted person is 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 mentions 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 kept *As-Salam* as one of His names.

The noted scholar Al-Khattabi writes that God is the Being from 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, then human beings should deal in the same way with each other. That is to say, we should relate to each other with peace and security, and not with severity and violence.

Who is Strong?

According to a *Hadith* report (*Sahih Bukhari*), 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.

When God's dealings with human beings are based on peace and security, then human beings should deal in the same way with each other.

To stop one's anger while in a state of anger is a sign of self-control. And, self-control is, undoubtedly, the greatest power. At moments when one is angry, self-control saves one from committing wrong actions. Someone who lacks the power of 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 losing 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 towards the person who provokes him 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.

Formula for Social Peace

What is the ideal formula for social peace? How can balanced conditions be established in society? In this regard, a *Hadith* report 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 he who wakes up a sleeping *fitna*. This is a natural formula for social peace.

The Prophet said that a strong person is not one who defeats others in wrestling, but, rather, only he who when angry, keeps his lower self under control.

The fact of the matter is that within every human being 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 dormant within every person's breast. It is present inside everyone, but, in accordance with the system of Creation, it is in a state of sleep. Under such conditions, a simple way to establish a peaceful society is to let the egotism that lies fast asleep inside people's breasts remain as it is.

Only those people whose egotism has been provoked 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 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.

Do Not Confront the Enemy

In a *Hadith* report 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. This means that if someone thinks of us as his enemy, we should not react in the same way by considering him our enemy and starting to fight with him. Rather, despite this person's enmity, we should seek to avoid quarrelling 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 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.'

**Establishing social peace is within our own control,
rather than being dependent on others.**

From this we learn that according to the Law of Nature, peace is the general rule, whereas 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 also more beneficial than the power of violence.

The Method of Non-Violence

According to a *Hadith* report (Sahih Bukhari) the Prophet said that God gives in response to softness what he does not give to sternness. 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 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* report 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, 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. By deviating from them, you can be sure that you will get nothing at all.

Limits of Dissension

A *Hadith* report (*Musnad of Ahmad*) relates that the Prophet declared that the best *jihad* is to utter a word of truth and justice in front of an oppressive ruler. On the other hand, in another *Hadith* report (*Collections by al-Bukhari*), the Prophet is 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. Likewise, in a *Hadith* report 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 grabs one's wealth.

Do not desire confrontation with your enemy, instead seek peace from God. — The Prophet

These *Hadith* reports appear to provide two different commandments. On 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 practical steps are concerned, one should completely abstain

from them. One must distinguish between the politics of exhortation and 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 push them out of power in the name of 'reform', it inevitably creates a violent atmosphere in society. However, if people abstain from such conflictual politics 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* report recorded in the *Sahih al-Bukhari* sheds light on a very important Islamic teaching. According to this report, whenever the Prophet had to choose between two methods with regard to any matter, he would always choose the easier one.

**The power of peace is both more effective and
beneficial than the power of violence.**

If you view this choice of the easier option in the context of violent versus peaceful methods, then it would be true to say that whenever the Prophet was faced with any matter, then he chose peaceful, and not violent, methods to deal with it.

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, what the *Hadith* report referred to above means by difficult method is a method through which it is difficult to achieve one's goal. Compared to this, by easy method is meant a method through which it is easy and certain to attain one's goal.

Flexibility, Not Stiffness

A *Hadith* report (*Sahih Muslim*) likens a *momin*, 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 goes away, the plant once again stands up. In this way, it saves itself from troubles and difficulties. According

to this *Hadith* report, there are two ways to face a storm. One way is to be stiff when faced with it. The other way is to exercise flexibility; 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 react to a storm by adopting the method of stiffness only show by this action of theirs 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* report, according to which the Prophet said that God will raise high those who behave modestly.

Peaceful Citizens

Explaining who a *momin* (a true believer) is, the Prophet is said to have remarked (Ibn Majah) that people's blood and wealth are safe from him.

God gives in response to gentleness what he does not give to harshness. — The Prophet

There are two ways of living in any society. You can live peacefully with others, or you can choose to keep quarreling with them. The *Hadith* report referred to in this instance indicates that the way of a true believer is to live along with others as a peaceful citizen. He lives without creating any problem at all for other people's life, property and honour. Under no conditions whatsoever does he engage in violence.

How can members of a society live at peace with each other, refraining from troubling and oppressing each other? There is one way—and that is, despite whatever complaints against others one may have, one should remain steadfast on the path of balance. One should bury deep in one's heart the complaints one has against 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. Such a peaceful society is an ideal human society. ◻

.....to be continued.

This article is in continuation of a series entitled 'The Culture of Peace' that commenced from Issue 19 (July 2014).

PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

An Intellectual Process

EXPERIENCE shows that man is like an innocent flower bud in his childhood. But as he reaches the age of maturity, he develops various perversions in his personality. For example: stubbornness, egoism, defiance etc. To develop a true personality man needs to cleanse himself of such perversions. Personality development is done in two ways. Man should have either preserved his nature in which he was born or else the only other method is to remove one by one, the artificial layers that cover his personality until his true nature emerges in all its purity. This is in likeness to the way cattle chew cud.

Research and experiments reveal that every experience or thought becomes a permanent part of the human mind and in turn shapes the human personality

According to modern psychological research, it has come to knowledge that the human mind can be divided into three major systems. These three parts are found in every human being right from their birth. They are:

1. Conscious mind
2. Sub-conscious mind
3. Unconscious mind

Research and experiments reveal that every experience or thought becomes a permanent part of the human mind and in turn shapes the human personality. Even if man tries to remove this thought or experience from his mind he will not be able to do so.

When a thought comes in the human mind, either positive or negative, it first appears in the conscious mind. This can also be called living memory. After this when man sleeps at night, due to natural processes, the thought moves from the conscious mind to the sub-conscious mind. When this process takes place, man has only 50 percent of conscious control over this thought. The remaining 50 percent is beyond his control.

When he sleeps the next night, this thought travels further and reaches his unconscious mind. At this stage, this thought is completely out of his conscious control.

These day-to-day thoughts which appear in the human mind, develop his personality. As the thoughts are, so will be the personality. Positive thoughts will develop a positive personality, but if these thoughts are negative, then his personality will continue to develop negatively. Such being the case, a pertinent question arises as to how to develop a positive personality.

The method of developing a positive personality is that when any negative thought emerges in the mind of man, he ought to eradicate it in the first instance itself. A specific process of converting the negative aspect into positive should be undertaken.

The method of developing a positive personality is that when any negative thought emerges in the mind of man, he ought to eradicate it in the first instance itself.

To consider a few examples: if a person is angry but forgives immediately, then the anger will not take the form of revenge. If the success of others above one creates a negativity, one should immediately convert it into acceptance; lest it turns into jealousy, becoming a part of one's personality. With every negative thought, this corrective process should be undertaken immediately. If there is a delay in this process, then it would soon happen that these thoughts will reach the sub-conscious mind and, after sometime, it will enter into the unconscious mind. When this happens, it will become such an integral part of the personality and even if man wants to detach it from his personality, he will not be able to do so.

Generally people do not carry out this cleansing process. They pay the price in the form of carrying a negative personality hidden behind a civilized appearance. The negative personality is actually an evil personality. Any man or woman who wants to save himself or herself from such a dreadful fate must adopt the above-mentioned corrective process in their daily life. Besides this, there is no other solution to this problem. □



ASHES BEAR WITNESS

Deeds are Forever

NABI Karim is a locality in Delhi. Ashok, a young man who worked as a labourer, lived there many years ago. One day, he was found dead near his house. According to the doctor's report, he had died of a sudden heart failure. This incident was not reported to the police. The next day, Ashok's body was taken to the banks of the Yamuna, where it was consigned to the flames. His ashes were then scattered in the river.

It seemed that matters had ended with this, and that if Ashok's death had been the result of a criminal conspiracy, there was now no possibility of finding out the truth. But Ashok's ashes made an astounding announcement, which no conventional sources were able to.

Ashok's mother, Chameli Devi, suspected that her son had not died a natural death, but that a friend of his, Suresh, had killed him by giving him liquor laced with poison. And so, she lodged a case with the police.

God has made this world in such a way that as soon as a deed is done, it gets affixed to the 'cosmic record' and no one can ever rub it off thereafter.

The only way that the police could investigate the case was to get hold of Ashok's ashes and examine them. The day Chameli Devi lodged her case with the police, a party of policemen arrived at the crematorium where Ashok's body had been cremated. As luck would have it, no other corpse had been burned on the same platform after Ashok's body, and so the police were able to gather some of his ashes. They sent these to the Central Forensic Science Laboratory for investigation. Six months later, the laboratory issued a report, certifying that Ashok had not died a natural death; but, rather, had been poisoned. Soon after this, Suresh, whom Chameli Devi had suspected of murdering her son, was arrested. In a report about this case, a daily newspaper commented:

Dead men tell no tales, but their ashes may.

People commit crimes and seek to hide the records of their deeds, thinking that they can wipe away the evidence of their actions. They

do wrong, and, imagining that they are very clever and powerful, try to conceal their actions, believing that no one will ever come to know about them. But they forget that they do not live in a world of their own making, and that this world has been made by God. God has made this world in such a way that as soon as a deed is done, it gets affixed to the 'cosmic record' and no one can ever rub it off thereafter.

Every person is free to do what he wants, but he is certainly not free to rub off the marks of his deeds. If Man were truly aware of this inability of his, he would abstain from oppression and wrongful deeds. □



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THE WORD OF GOD

From The Scriptures

THE Quran is the book of God. It has been preserved in its entirety since its revelation to the Prophet of Islam between 610 and 632 A.D. It is a book that brings glad tidings to mankind, along with divine admonition, and stresses the importance of man's discovery of the Truth on a spiritual and intellectual level.

Translated from Arabic and commentary
by **Maulana Wahiduddin Khan**

Say, 'Tell me if the punishment of God came upon you or the Hour overtook you, would you call upon any other than God, if you are truthful?' Indeed, it is on Him that you would call, and He could remove that [affliction] which made you call on Him, if He will, and then you would forget [the false deities] which you associate with Him!' 6: 40-41

History bears witness to the fact that a man starts invoking the name of God in crucial moments; even one who relied on beings other than God, or did not believe in God's existence at all. This is nature's testament to God's existence and His being the absolute authority. Under extraordinary circumstances, when the outward veils are removed and when man dismisses all superficial thoughts, he does not remember anything except God. In other words, on reaching the point of helplessness, every man admits the existence of God. But the Quran demands that man should follow a course of acceptance and obedience at a time when there is no apparent compulsion to do so.

All animals other than man instinctively lead realistic lives. But what pushes man towards realism and admission of the truth is the psychology of fear. In the world of animals all things are accomplished by instinct. The same role is played by fear of God (*taqwa*) in the world of human beings.

We sent messengers before you [Prophet] to many communities and afflicted their people with suffering and hardship, so that they might humble themselves. 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. When they had forgotten Our admonition, We granted them all that they desired; but just as they were rejoicing in what they were given, We seized them suddenly and they were plunged into despair. The wrongdoers were thus annihilated. All praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds. 6: 42-45

When a man is faced with the truth and he does not accept it, God does not seize him immediately, but gives him some jolts by way of monetary loss or physical trouble, so that he should review his way of life, and his thinking should be revolutionised. Life's events are not mere happenings but vibrant messages from God sent to wake a man up from his sleep of forgetfulness. But man learns nothing from these things. He consoles himself by saying that these are normal ups and downs and that such ups and downs do occur in life. In this way, Satan all too often diverts the mind of the individual from possible divine disfavour and pushes him into the negligence of his religious duties by providing him with plausible justifications. When a man indulges in this type of behaviour again and again, his heart loses all sensitivity to what is true or false; right or wrong. His conscience eventually becomes totally blunted.

When a man ignores the warnings received from God, His approach towards him changes. Now, God's decision for him is for the doors to comfort and success should be opened for him; he should be granted prosperity in full measure; his honour and popularity should increase. This is in reality, a punishment, so that the evil hidden in him should come out clearly. The purpose of this is that man should feel satisfied with himself and become more and more insensitive and much bolder in ignoring the Truth. And, as a result, his meriting punishment is fully established. When this purpose is achieved, God's retribution suddenly overwhelms him. He is deprived of worldly life and presented before the court of the Hereafter, so that he may be awarded the punishment of Hell.

This world is God's world. Here the right to have one's greatness extolled belongs to only one Being. So, if a man ignores the divine truth, he is in fact disrespecting God. In a world over-arched by the majesty of the Almighty, he wants to establish his own greatness. In this way he is indulging in unparalleled transgression. He is being insolent to God before whom no behaviour other than that of the utmost humility is proper. □

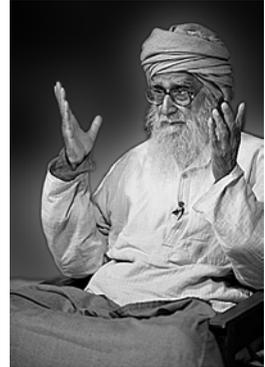
ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

Does the Quran teach Muslims to kill others?

There are certain verses in the Quran, which convey injunctions similar to the following: 'Kill them wherever you find them.' (2:191)

Referring to such verses, there are some who attempt to give the impression that Islam is a religion of war and violence. This is totally untrue. Such verses relate in a restricted sense, to those who have unilaterally attacked the Muslims. The above verse does not convey the general command of Islam.



The truth of the matter is that the Quran was not revealed in the complete form in which it exists today. It was revealed from time to time, according to the circumstances, over a time span of 23 years. If this is divided into years of war and peace, the period of peace amounts to 20 years, while that of war amounts only to 3 years. The revelations during the 20 peaceful years were the peaceful teachings of Islam as are conveyed in the verses regarding the realization of God, worship, morality, justice, etc.

This division of commands into different categories is a natural one and is found in all religious books. For instance, the Gita, the holy book of the Hindus, pertains to wisdom and moral values. Yet along with this is the exhortation of Krishna to Arjun, encouraging him to fight (3:30). This does not mean that believers in the Gita should wage wars all the time. Gandhiji, after all, derived his philosophy of non-violence from the same Gita. The exhortation to wage war in the Gita applies only to exceptional cases where the circumstances leave no other choice. But for general day-to-day existence it gives the same peaceful commands as derived from it by Mahatma Gandhi.

Similarly, Jesus Christ said:

Do not think that I came to bring peace on Earth.
I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

Matthew, Chapter 10

It would not be right to conclude that the religion preached by Christ

was one of war and violence, for such utterances relate purely to particular occasions. So far as general life is concerned, Christ taught peaceful values, such as the building up of a good character, loving each other, helping the poor and needy, etc.

The same is true of the Quran. When the Prophet of Islam emigrated from Makkah to Medina, the unbelieving tribes were aggressive towards him. But the Prophet always averted their attacks by the exercise of patience and the strategy of avoidance. However on certain occasions no other options existed, save that of retaliation. Therefore, he had to do battle on certain occasions. It was these circumstances, which occasioned those revelations relating to war. These commands, being specific to certain circumstances, had no general application. They were not meant to be valid for all time to come. That is why the permanent status of the Prophet has been termed a 'mercy for all mankind.' (21:107)

Does Islam Permit Terrorism and Suicide Bombings?

According to the teachings of Islam, Muslims are not permitted to commit suicidal bombings in order to destroy the enemy. Strapping explosives on to oneself and hurling oneself upon the civilian settlements of even those with whom one is at war, for the purpose of destroying the enemy, and in the process killing oneself deliberately, is totally un-Islamic. This can in no way be termed '*Shahadah*' (martyrdom). According to Islam we can become martyrs, but we cannot court a martyr's death deliberately.

Terrorism based on religion is perhaps the most dangerous phenomenon of Muslim history. Throughout Islamic history, that is, until very recently, action has always meant result-oriented action. But in modern times, for the first time, the Muslim mentality has become so distorted that, on occasion, fruitless action has also come to be considered desirable. Suicide bombing, which shows a preference for death over life, falls into this category. While in the early history of Islam this was an alien concept, in modern times, for Muslims, it has acquired the position of a superior course of action.

How has the act of suicide come to rate so highly as a solution to political problems? The reason is not traceable to some special devotional attachment to Islam, but is due rather to an inimical attitude towards man. As the suicide bomber ties the bombs onto his body, it is not pro-Islamic, but rather anti-humanity sentiments, which motivate him to

adopt such a deadly course. This is a reality that no one in his senses can deny.

According to the Quran, a Muslim is one who is man's well-wisher. But the greatest weakness of the Muslims of today is that they do not in their hearts wish well of others. They hold all nations to be their foes. This animosity has so increased that they are ready to cross all moral limits when it comes to attacking their supposed enemies. If they think they can harm them by killing themselves, they are willing to take the extreme step of suicide bombing.

The truth is that suicide is totally forbidden (*haram*) in Islam. Under no circumstances and on no pretext whatsoever is committing suicide lawful. It is forbidden to the point where, if someone is dying, and it is certain that he will not survive, even in his final moments Islam does not allow him to take his own life. □



Solution to Poverty

Giving favour is not a solution to the problem of poverty.

Favour makes one an intellectually stagnant person, while meeting challenges makes one an intellectually awakened person.

An advertisement for 'Spirit of Islam Online'. On the left, a laptop is shown with its screen displaying an article titled 'THE GREATER JIHAD'. The article text is partially visible, starting with 'I SLAM is, in essence, a practical religion...'. To the right of the laptop, the text reads 'NOW ACCESS SPIRIT OF ISLAM ONLINE' in a serif font. Below this text is a hand cursor icon pointing upwards. At the bottom right, the website address 'www.spiritofislam.co.in' is displayed in a sans-serif font.

Glossary

Al-Bukhari 810-870 AD; Muhammad Al-Bukhari; Persian Islamic scholar who authored the *Hadith* collection known as Sahih al-Bukhari, regarded as the most authentic collection of *Hadith*.

As-Salaam The Peace; The Source of Peace and Security; one of the names (attributes) of God.

at-Tirmidhi Sunan at-Tirmidhi; *Hadith* collection of Abu Isa Muhammad ibn `Isa at-Tirmidhi, Persian Islamic scholar died 892 AD; one of the six major *hadith* collections.

fitna persecution

Hadith sayings and deeds of the Prophet of Islam.

halal permissible

haram forbidden

Ibn Majah 824-887 AD; Islamic scholar and compiler of *Hadith*.

ijtihad exercise of judgement with reasoning.

ijtihadi creative reinterpretation

Jihad struggle in the way of God.

jizyah punitive tax

Kabah; Kaaba the sacred house of God built originally by prophets Abraham and Ishmael in Makkah (present day Mecca).

Kanzul Ummal *Hadith* collection by Islamic scholar Ali ibn Abd-al-Malik al-Hindi.

Luke One of the books of the New Testament; the Book of Acts.

Madinah Medina; also called Yathrib during the time of Prophet Muhammad.

Madinat ul-Rasul; Madinat ul-Nabi The City of the Prophet.

Makkah Mecca

Makkan from or of Makkah (Mecca).

momin Arabic for true believer.

Musnad; Musnad Ahmed a collection of *Hadith* reports by Islamic scholar Ahmad bin Hanbal 780-855 AD.

Muwatta The first written collection of *Hadith* compiled and edited by Imam Malik ibn Anas 711-795 AD.

Queen of Sheba Monarch of the ancient kingdom of Sheba or Saba.

Quraysh the dominant tribe of Makkah during the time when Prophet Mohammad was born; genealogical ancestry traced to prophets Abraham and Ismael.

Sahih Muslim Famous *Hadith* collection by Imam Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj 815-875 AD.

salam peace

Shariah; Shir'a moral code and religious law of Islam.

Sunnah also *Sunnath* practice and teachings of Prophet Muhammad.

taqlidi traditional; imitative of past precedent.

Ulema also ulama; religious scholars.

Ummah religious community; followers of a prophet.

Ummul Kitab The Essence of the Book—Quran.

Zulm oppression

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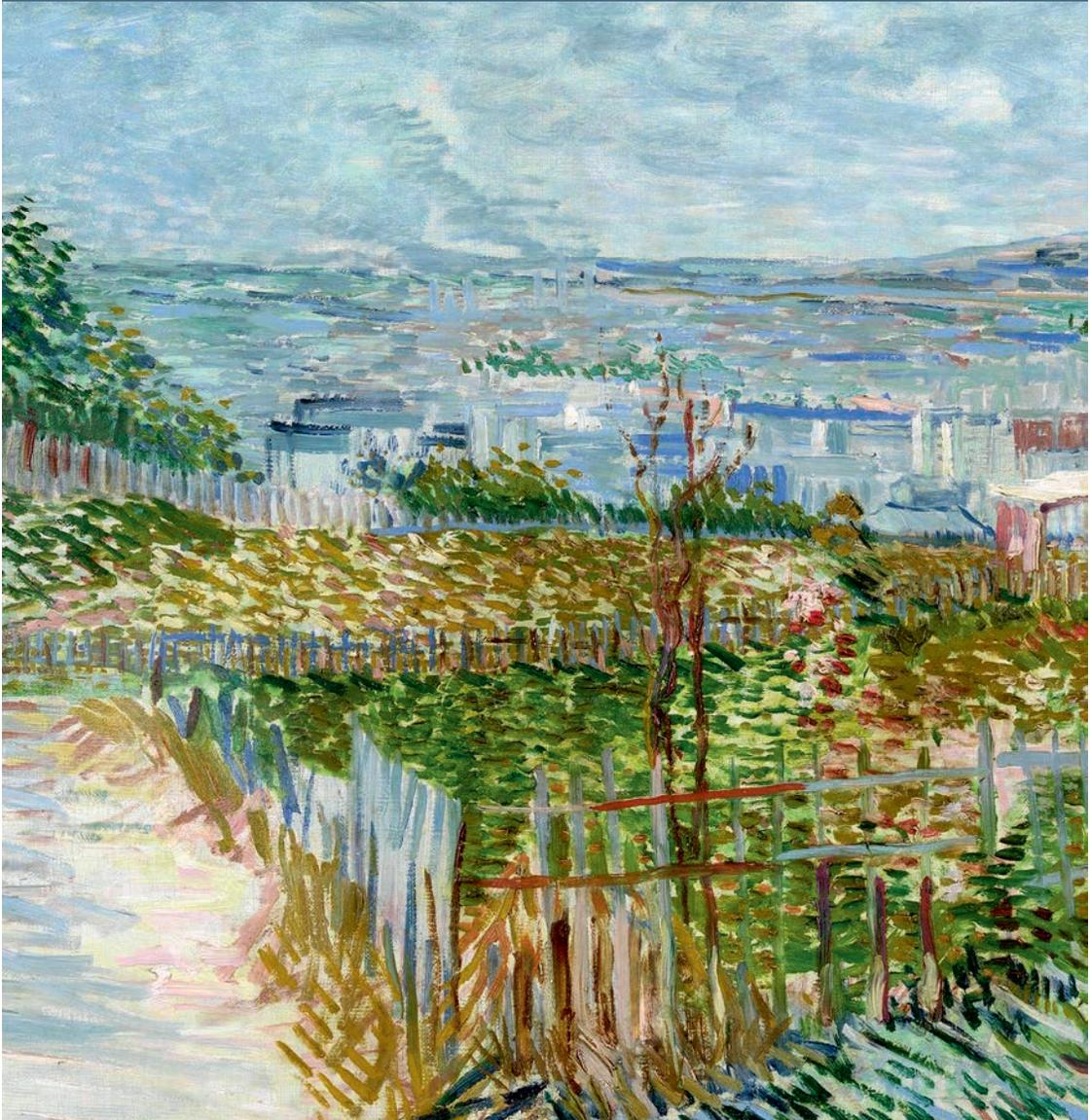
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