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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS
Goal of Islam

SOCIAL HARMONY
Problem Solving in Society

TRUTH—AN ANALYSIS
Relative or Absolute

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Spiritual Living

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

ISSUE 5, MAY 2013

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FROM THE CHIEF EDITOR'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.



NON-VIOLENCE—A WAY OF LIFE

NON-VIOLENCE is a way of life. It relates to one's entire existence. Practising non-violence means, in short, to lead a life of positivity despite unfavourable conditions; to adopt a conciliatory and not a confrontational approach in social life. This applies both to individuals and to groups.

This world can be likened to a rose bush, which possesses thorns as well as flowers. Thorns are inseparable parts of the rose bush. This is an immutable law of nature. If we are to pluck the flowers, we have only one option in this matter and that is to avoid the thorns. The beautiful colour and the fragrance of the rose can come within reach, only of those who have the courage to grasp it in spite of its thorns. Otherwise, the possession of such a flower will remain an impossibility.

This phenomenon of nature shows us the way to lead a realistic life; that is, to accept the favourable, while avoiding the unfavourable. For, in this world there will always be a multiplicity of both pleasant and unpleasant situations. These may seem in many ways to be of man's creation, but in reality, they have been planned by the Creator Himself. Their existence is as real as that of fire and water. No one is powerful enough to rid the world of all that is negative, leaving only what is positive. The good cannot be separated from the bad.

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

This being so, there is only one option for us, and that is what we call non-violence. Non-violence is not just passivity. Non-violence, in actual fact, is a well-considered policy, enabling man to live in peace, even in a violent situation. Indeed, its practice is synonymous with peaceful behaviour.

Generally, non-violence is seen as an absence of war. That is, eschewing the way of violent encounter in favour of a peaceful approach. But, this is a very limited definition of non-violence. For, the attitude of non-violence relates to man's entire life, beginning from the moment he steps into this world. The non-violent way is valid in all ambits, right from hearth and home to the sphere of international affairs.

I am a non-violent person by birth. That is why, for me, non-violence is not just an ideology. It is rather a matter of personal experience. Throughout my entire life, consciously or unconsciously, I have been leading a life of non-violence.

I still remember the time when I was about 10-years-old and living in a village in Uttar Pradesh, India. I was standing outside my house, when a village boy passed by. He abused me, but I was neither angry nor did I feel any desire to seek revenge. I just went inside my house. This attitude continued in my later life.

For instance, communal riots were set off in India after 1947. The newspapers were full with the news of confrontation and bloody clashes. Everyone reacted negatively. People wanted to take revenge. But, I did not react negatively to this volatile situation. The simple solution I offered to this problem was for Muslims to opt for the way of avoidance in accordance with the teachings of their own religion. This would put an end to the communal riots. It was to opt for the way of non-violence in social matters.

Similarly, when in 2003 tension built up between the American President, George Bush and the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussain, and it was feared that America was going to destroy Iraq by bombarding it, I offered the solution that Saddam Hussain, who had taken control of Iraq by a military coup, had better quit his presidential post and then America would have no reason to wage a war against his country. This meant opting for the way of non-violence in an international crisis.

Likewise, during the mandate of the Pakistani President, Zia ul-Haq, when freedom movements were launched with great fervour in Kashmir and Punjab, I wrote an article, published in The Hindustan Times in 1990, entitled, "Acceptance of Reality".

In this article I suggested that the people of Kashmir and Punjab should accept the political status quo. That is, instead of opting for the path of clash and confrontation, they should exploit the opportunities, which presented themselves for progress and construction along peaceful lines in fields other than politics, as had happened in Japan. This suggestion also meant adopting the way of non-violence in a scenario of political confrontation.

When you stand in the Himalayan foothills, you will see torrents of water sent down by the ice melting on the mountain tops. On the way, the fast-flowing water repeatedly meets obstacles in the form of boulders. These hamper the flow of the water, but the water does not attempt to break the stones in order to follow a straight course. On the contrary, what it does is avoid the stones and find its way around their sides, and eventually reaches the plains. This is the way of non-violence.

To put it another way, non-violence is non-confrontation. In this world, the non-confrontational approach is the only right approach. Non-confrontation does not mean cowardice or accepting defeat. It is in actual fact, the same strategy which is known as 'buying time'. That is to say, avoiding wasting one's time in futile activities and directing all one's energy towards result-oriented activities.

Following a policy of non-violence means that when man is faced with an unpleasant situation, he should not react negatively but should rather react positively. Such a policy is the result of wise planning. All the successes of this world stem from wise planning. Without wise planning, there can be no success.

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TRUTH—AN ANALYSIS

IT is generally believed that Truth is not something absolute. Different people have different perceptions or criterion for Truth. That which is Truth for one, may not be Truth for another. In other words, Truth is something relative not real. A philosopher has described it in the following words:

There are no full stops in Truth, only commas.

Some people think in this way but this is a notion that stands rejected *prima facie*. This supposition does not have any logic or rational ground to stand on. In this world, whatever man believes upon, he does it in an absolute sense. This is human nature. If man is not able to decipher a thing in its absolute sense, he continues his research until he has discovered it.

Truth is the only thing that man requires for fulfilling his spiritual need.

For example, in ancient times, man knew very little about the sun and the solar system. His search continued for thousands of years till he came to discover the overall system of the planets. Till the time man had not reached this discovery he continued his investigation.

The same is the case with other fields of knowledge. For thousands of years, man has engaged himself in research and investigation in various disciplines of knowledge. This quest is ongoing till date and will continue till he reaches the actual reality. This is because to man everything has an absolute form; from the stars to an atom—there is no exception to this rule.

It appears that the human mind takes everything in an absolute sense. This was the conviction on the basis of which the process of search and research continued through the millennia. If man were to believe that things did not occur in their absolute form, then scientific activities would come to a complete halt. Scientific discoveries would come to a standstill. The same principle applies to personal matters.

Man considers himself to be absolute. If he doesn't think this way, then

he cannot stay alive for even a single day. Man takes his mother, his wife, and his children in an absolute sense: the very survival of the family system is based upon it. In its absence the entire system of human life would be shattered. Similarly man considers his property like his house, his business and his bank balance to be absolute. If he did not think like this, his economic life would never take shape.

In such a situation it would be an exception to consider that Truth is not absolute. It would mean that in the absolute world, Truth has a non-absolute existence. But, there is no logical basis for accepting this concept. It is incomprehensible to believe that in this vast universe, where everything else is in its absolute sense, Truth, as an exception to this rule is not in its absolute form. It is a contradiction in logical terms, and will never be acceptable to the minds of intellectuals.

A seeker of Truth is looking for the answer to the question: "What is that knowledge by which I may believe?" When he finds Truth, he makes it supreme.

This is not a simple matter. Upon reflection, we find that man has a dual existence—body and mind. Except for Truth everything caters to fulfilling the physical needs of man. Truth is the only thing that man requires for fulfilling his spiritual need.

Now, it is inconceivable that all objects of fulfilment of our physical needs are in their absolute form while Truth that fulfils our spiritual needs is not absolute. To accept this division we will have to admit that there is a big contradiction in this world that is that the objects of our material needs are available here in an absolute form while the objects of our spiritual needs are, by way of an exception not available here in an absolute form.

A philosopher, who believed in Truth supporting his point of view, said that Truth is the biggest requirement of man. Without it, man is totally incomplete. In fact, Truth is such a big human requirement that even if it is not absolute, we will have to supposedly take it to be in an absolute form.

The truth is that the denial of Truth to be absolute, is akin to a mental suicide. Those who hold this belief are not serious in their utterance. Refusing to accept the Truth in its absolute form is similar with refusing to accept one's mother in the absolute form.

Another possible concept could be that nothing is true. Or that Truth is something different altogether or has no existence. This kind of thought is without doubt an intellectual luxury that no serious man can afford to indulge in.

On a serious note, a man can, however say that he has not found the Truth or that he is just a seeker but no serious man can say that Truth is not absolute. A seeker of Truth is looking for the answer to the question: "What is that knowledge by which I may believe?" When he finds Truth, he makes it supreme.

**If man is not able to decipher a thing in its
absolute sense, then he continues his research
until he has discovered it.**

In the universe that man lives in, everything is known to be absolute and if something has not yet been discovered in its absolute sense, then man is continuously struggling hard to discover its absolute position. The same is the case with man's identity. Man by his nature is an absolute-loving person. He wants to live in conviction. Truth gives us conviction. Only with conviction can we take any action. Our behaviour is governed by our conviction.

If he knows a woman to be his mother, then he wants to have an absolute belief in the fact that she is his mother. Similarly, when he owns a property then his ownership should be in the absolute sense. If this does not happen then man will be in an uncertain state of mind about everything. And it is a fact that man cannot live in uncertainty.

These facts make it clear that the concept of absolutism is exactly in accordance with human nature. On the contrary, regarding everything as non-absolute is against the very nature of human beings. As far as "Truth" is concerned, if it is not absolute, it cannot give us any conviction. To say that Truth is not absolute is like saying that I do not believe in anything to be Truth. A man can only become a skeptic with such a belief. And to be a skeptic is not a practical position for any human being.



THE CONCEPT OF TAWHEED

FUNDAMENTAL to the religious structure of Islam is the concept of *tawheed*, or monotheism. As the seed is to tree, so is *tawheed* to Islam. Just as the tree is a wonderfully developed extension of the seed, so is the religious system of Islam a multi-faceted expression of a single basic concept. For, monotheism in Islam does not mean simply belief in one God, but in God's oneness in all respects. No one shares in this oneness of God.

Anthropologists would have us believe that the concept of God in religion began with polytheism; that polytheism gradually developed with monotheism. That is, the concept of *tawheed* was an evolutionary feature of religion which emerged at a later stage. But, according to Islamic belief, the concept of *tawheed* has existed since the beginning of human life on this earth. The first man—Adam—was the first messenger of God. It was this first messenger who taught human beings the concept of *tawheed*.

**Monotheism in Islam does not mean simply belief
in one God, but in God's oneness in all respects.
No one shares in this oneness of God.**

It was in later generations that this religious system began to change. This happened principally because people began to make the assumption that divinity was inherent in natural phenomena. They wondered at the loftiness of the mountains, the unceasing flow of the rivers, and the extraordinary brilliance of the sun and moon, and took it that things possessed of such awesome attributes must necessarily share in God's divinity. Men gifted with special talents likewise came to be included in the category of the divine; they were supposed to be incarnations of God Himself. It was in this manner that the concept of polytheism crept into the religious system.

In consonance with the view that human religions began with *tawheed*—with polytheism as a later development—the basic mission of all the Prophets who made their appearance at intervals in this world was to lead people away from the worship of many gods and back to the worship of the One God. In other words, to turn them away from the adulation of creatures and towards reverence for the Creator.

As a proof of the Creator's existence, the Quran advances the very fact of the existence of the universe. All studies of the universe show that it cannot be *sui genesis*: some other agent is essential for the universe to have come into existence. This means that the choice for us is not between a universe with God, and a universe without God. It is rather between a universe with God, and no universe at all. Since a non-existent universe is utterly inconceivable, we are forced to accept the option of a universe with God—a necessary condition also for the existence of human beings.

The basic mission of all Prophets was to lead people away from the adulation of creatures and towards reverence for the Creator.

God created man and settled him on the earth. After installing him here, He has kept an unceasing watch over him. Life and death are equally in His hands. Whatever man gains or loses, it is all a matter of the will of God. As the Quran expresses it:

God; there is no god but He—the Living, the Eternal One.
Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. His is what the heavens and the earth contain. Who can intercede with Him, unless by His leave? He is cognizant of men's affairs, now and in the future. Men can grasp only that part of His Knowledge which He wills.
His throne is as vast as the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of both does not weary Him.
He is the Exalted, the Immense One.

THE QURAN, 2: 255

While *tawheed* means the oneness of God, it must be stressed that this concept differs radically from pantheistic or animist notions that all the forms of existence are diverse manifestations of one and the same reality. On the contrary, the oneness of God as defined in Islam means that there is only one Being of the nature of God. All other things of the universe, be they physical or non-physical, are the creations of this One God: they are in no respect constituents of, or partners in the divine godhead.

However, in Islamic theology, *tawheed* does have two aspects to it: *tawheed fi az-Zat* and *tawheed fi as-Sifat*, that is, oneness of being and oneness of attributes. This means that in addition to the fact of there being only one Being who enjoys the status of divinity and possesses

divine powers, there is also the fact that no-one else can have a share in, or lay claim to God's attributes.

These include the power of creating and sustaining the universe with all its countless bodies in motion, of sustaining and nourishing our world, in short, of governing all the happenings in the heavens and on earth; all of these are directly managed by God. No representative or deputy of God has any power—either independent or delegated—over the events of the universe:

He throws the veil of night over the day.
Swiftly they follow one another. It was He who
created the sun, the moon and the stars and
made them subservient to His will.
His is the creation, His the command.
Blessed be God, the Lord of all creatures.

THE QURAN, 7: 54

The divisibility of the divine attributes is totally alien to Islam. Just as God is alone in His being, so is He alone in His attributes. In recognition of His uniqueness, the Quran opens with the following invocation:

Praise be to God, Lord of the universe, the Compassionate, the Merciful, Sovereign of the Day of Judgement. You alone we worship, and to You alone we turn for help. Guide us to the straight path, the path of those whom You have favoured, not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray.

THE QURAN, 1: 1-7



Small is beautiful

*Small, individual changes
can indeed, bring big results*

A PRICE FOR EVERYTHING

THERE is but one law of nature, which applies to both animate and inanimate objects. It is that there is a price to be paid for every end in life: without paying that price, nothing can be achieved.

American pastor Harry Emerson Fosdick, (1878–1969), has explained this fact of life in these words:

“No steam or gas ever drives anything until it is confined.
No Niagara is ever turned into light and power until it is tunnelled.
No life ever grows until it is focused, dedicated, disciplined.”
(Living Under Tension, by Harry Emerson Fosdick)

In this world one has to sink before one can rise; one has to resign oneself to loss before one can gain, to backwardness before one can advance; one has to be able to accept defeat before one can claim victory.

**There is a price to be paid for every end in life:
without paying that price, nothing can be achieved.**

The world in which man lives has been created by God, not by man himself. This may appear to be a simple fact, but it is one that man usually forgets in his everyday life. Since, we are living in God's world, we have no alternative but to understand His laws, and follow them. There is no other way we can make a place for ourselves in the world.

Those who wish to advance and be successful in life without passing through the necessary stages, will have to build another world for themselves—one which satisfies their own requirements; for, in the world that God has created, their dreams can never come true.



CULTURAL VERSION OF ISLAM

ASCHOLAR in the history of religion has rightly observed: 'Religion begins as an ideology but after some generations it is reduced to a culture.' This observation applies to all religions including Islam. Present-day Islam practiced by Muslims is no more than a culture. Although the form is preserved, the spirit is absent.

The only exception with the religion of Islam is that the scriptures of Islam are totally intact. All those deteriorations among Muslims exclusively pertain to the Muslim community. The key formula for the right understanding of Islam is to differentiate between Islam and Muslims. You have to form an opinion by studying the scripture rather than the practice of Muslims. Anyone who wants to know the real picture of Islam can refer to the scriptures and discover the true version of Islam without fail.

Present day Islam practiced by Muslims is no more than a culture. Although the form is preserved, the spirit is absent.

It is said that Buddhism is a godless religion but this is not a monopoly of Buddhism. Present religion of Islam adopted by Muslims also seems to be a godless Islam. The supreme concern of Islam is God; unfortunately, if you examine the Muslim agenda or conversations and concerns you will find that God does not figure in any of them.

The Quran is the most authentic source of Islam. In the Quran 'Allah'—God—by name is referred no less than 2,700 times. Apart from Allah there are other names (*asma*) and if you include these names the number may almost get doubled. Keeping this fact in mind one can say the religion that the Quran presents is a God-oriented religion.

The greatest concern of Islam is God. Quran is the Book of God. The mind the Quran builds is a God-oriented mind. A believer is one who discovers God, whose thinking is God-oriented thinking, whose speech is God-oriented speech, whose behaviour and character are totally based on the concept of God Almighty.

The Quran emphasizes several times that believers should “remember God often”. THE QURAN, 33: 41, 62: 10

It means that a believer is so overwhelmed with the concept of God that every moment he is bound to remember God. There is a *Hadith* (the sayings and deeds of the Prophet) that the Prophet used to remember God on every occasion. It means that he was able to turn every occasion into a point of reference for the remembrance of God. The Prophet was a role model and the same conduct is required by every believer. This is the only sign of a true believer in God.

Spiritless form is a common phenomenon that may be observed in every degenerate community.

The other sign of cultural Islam is that although in terms of form every Islamic teaching seems to be present among Muslims but it is without the inner content of the teaching. Spiritless form is a common phenomenon that may be observed in every degenerate community. This phenomenon was mentioned as a prediction in a *Hadith*, in these words:

There will come a time when nothing will remain except
the name of Islam and the script of the Quran.
SHUAB-UL-IMAN, AL-BAIHAQI

Another similar *Hadith* is:

Islam began as a stranger. And, finally, it will again
become a stranger. Let, then, the strangers be blessed.
SAHIH MUSLIM

The present Muslim generation all over the world is an example of this Prophetic prediction.

When degeneration sets in, Muslims develop the notion that Islam by birth is as good as Islam by choice. But according to the scriptures this definition of Islam is completely wrong. This is mentioned in the Quran in these words:

Believers, believe in God and His Messenger and in the Scripture
He sent down to His Messenger, as well as what He sent down before.
THE QURAN, 4: 136

In other words: 'O believers, re-discover Islam. If you are Muslim by birth, make your religion your choice.'

The key formula for the right understanding of Islam is to differentiate between Islam and Muslims.

One other phenomenon of the degenerate community of Muslims is that they derive their concept of Islam from history rather than the original scriptures—Quran and *Hadith*. Present Muslims are examples of this kind of deviation. For the present Muslims the immediate reference of Islam is that of later history. They fail to go beyond history and derive Islamic concepts directly from the original scriptures.

Islam in its later history emerged as a political empire while during the Prophet's time there was no such political empire. Due to this change in focus Muslims developed a very curious type of psyche: consciously or unconsciously they feel that Islam and a position of strength are inseparable. If they find themselves in a modest position they feel deprived and frustrated.

From the above examples, it is evident that the Islam as portrayed by Muslims nowadays is not the true religion but a version corrupted by Muslim culture.



Triumph over negativity

*The power of positive behaviour
can triumph over
the power of negativity,
while the power of negativity
cannot win anything —
it can only lead to destruction.*

ACCEPTING DEFEAT

IN 1831, an American citizen went into business. In 1832 his business failed, so he entered the field of politics, but without any success in that sphere. He reverted to business in 1834, and was again a failure.

In 1841, he had a nervous breakdown. Once recovered, he again entered the political arena, in the hope that his party would nominate him as a candidate for Congress. His hopes were dashed, however, when his name failed to appear in the list of candidates. The first chance he had to run for the Senate was in 1855, but he was defeated in the election. In 1858, he once stood in the congressional elections, and lost once again.

Once defeat is accepted, one is immediately in a position to start life's journey afresh.

The name of this repeatedly unsuccessful person was Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865). So great were his services to his country that he is now known as the architect of modern America.

How did Abraham Lincoln manage to gain such a great reputation in American political and national history? How did he win his way to such a high position? According to Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, the secret behind his success was that “he knew how to accept defeat”.

This great secret of life is realism, and there is no form of realism greater than accepting defeat. To do so is to acknowledge the fact that, far from being ahead of others, one is behind them. In other words, it is to know where one stands in life.

Once defeat is accepted, one is immediately in a position to start life's journey afresh, for such a journey can only commence from where one actually is; it cannot start from a point that one has not yet reached.



A SUBLIME CHARACTER

EASTERN Bengal was under the central sultanate of Delhi during the age preceding the Mughal rule. Many a times during this period the governors here revolted against the centre and captured the throne. Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah (1390–1411 AD) was one of them who having revolted against the central Delhi Sultanate established his independent rule in eastern Bengal.

The secret of progress of any community is for it to possess men of sublime character.

At that time Dhaka was not in existence; Sonargaon was the seat of the government. An English historian, Francis Bradley-Birt, has given an account of an incident of this Muslim emperor in the book, *Dacca: The Romance of an Eastern Capital*. In the second edition of this book printed from London, 1914, the incident has been recorded thus:

One day Ghiyas al-Din was practicing archery. Incidentally, his arrow injured the only son of a widow. The woman did not know that the arrow was shot by the king. She went to a *Qazi* (judge) with her complaint. The *Qazi* discerned that the arrow had been shot by the King. He wavered for long as he had to choose between two options of either giving priority to fear of the King or to fear of God. In the end the fear of God prevailed over him. He called the King to be held accountable in the court. As soon as the King received the call of the *Qazi* he left for the court without any hesitation. But he also hid a small sword in his clothes. The *Qazi* did not make any special arrangements for the King in his court. After investigating the matter the *Qazi* gave the decision that the King must pay a reasonable amount of money to the widow as compensation in order that his grievous error be forgiven. The King obeyed the command without any complaint and gave the widow a big amount of money to atone for his mistake. When the proceedings ended the *Qazi* rose from his chair and fell at the feet of the King. The King immediately held him up and showed him the sword that he had hidden in his clothes. The King said to him, 'I brought this sword so that I could punish you in case you deviated from the path of justice in the proceeding. But you gave the decision in accordance with justice and did not fear me and therefore you deserve utmost respect.'

The tomb of this King, who set an example of justice, still exists in Sonargaon, Naraynganj district of current day Bangladesh.

A person with a sublime character is one who accepts one's mistake instead of concealing them behind excuses and explanations.

The secret of progress of any community is for it to possess men of sublime character. The presence of such individuals makes the community alive and the absence of these causes the community to stagnate. A heedful individual is one who lays importance on principles in the face of interests; one who accepts one's mistake instead of concealing them behind excuses and explanations; one who ignores personal complaints rather than getting affected by it; and one who honours an individual even after having a verdict pronounced against himself.



Bearing Losses

Anyone who has divided his time and his energy in many activities cannot achieve a great goal.

A great goal necessarily requires total dedication, that is, working for a specific target by making concerted effort.

One incurs losses at various fronts due to this concentration on one goal, but the secret of any great success lies in bearing these losses.

THE ISSUE: ABUSE OF THE PROPHET

MUSLIMS in general believe that, judging by the Islamic *shariah*—religious law, the punishment for one who abuses the Prophet should be death. If you ask them to substantiate this claim, they will immediately refer to *Fiqh* Islamic jurisprudence. They will say that it is an accepted ordinance in Islamic *Fiqh* that anyone held to have been abusing the Prophet should be executed.

This kind of reference in itself is baseless. For killing a person comes under capital punishment and a law of this nature has to be derived directly from the Quran and *Hadith*, the source books in Islam, rather than from some discipline developed later on the basis of interpretation. It is an established fact that in Islam only the Quran and *Hadith* hold the position of authentic sources. No third source is legally tenable. So far as *fiqh* is concerned, it is totally based on *Qayas* (inference). And inferences made by the scholars can never be an accepted source in any law.

**It is an established fact that in Islam only the Quran and
Hadith hold the position of authentic sources.
No third source is legally tenable.**

The issue of *shatm-ar-rasul* (abuse of the Prophet) has been discussed in the books of law and a number of books have been written exclusively on this subject. Some of these are:

Al-Sarimul-Maslul 'ala Shatimir-Rasul
by Taqiuddin Ahmad Ibn Taimiyya (1328).

Al-Saiful-Maslul 'ala man Sabbar-Rasul
by Taqiuddin Abul-Hasan 'Ali bin 'Abdul-Kafi Al-Subuki (1355).

Tambihul-wulat Wal-Hukkam 'ala Akahmi Shatimi Khairil-Anam
by S. Muhammad Amin bin 'Umar al-Shami (1836).

But all these and other such books written on the subject carry no valid reference from the Quran and *Hadith*. The first question to be asked in this regard is: which verse of the Quran gives this injunction to kill the abuser of the Prophet? In all the chapters of the Quran with all of

their hundreds of verses, there is not a single verse which gives the command to kill an abuser of the Prophet.

Those who support this concept cite certain verses of the Quran, but these are totally irrelevant to the issue concerned. For instance, Ibn Taimiyya quotes in his book, *Al-Sarimul-Maslul 'ala Shatimir-Rasul* certain verses, one of which is:

Those who annoy God's messenger will have a woeful punishment.

THE QURAN 9: 61

The Quran and *Hadith* have not given any command to kill an abuser of the Prophet.

The 'woeful punishment' mentioned in this verse of the Quran clearly refers to the punishment in the life after death, rather than punishment in this world. It is irrational to fail to differentiate between killing in this world and punishment in the next world. Punishment in this world is the result of a sentence pronounced in a human court, whereas punishment in the next life will result directly from the divine verdict. These punishments differ entirely from one another in nature. The argument that a Quranic verse equates retribution in the after-life with punishment in this world is totally without logic.

The second source of Islamic *Shariah* is the *Hadith* or the sayings and deeds of the Prophet. But those who advocate executing the command to kill any abuser of the Prophet will not find a single line to support their argument. They might establish their stand if they could quote a tradition of the Prophet which clearly says, 'Anyone who abuses your Prophet should be killed.' But we can say with certainty that in the whole body of *Hadith* literature, no such authentic tradition has been recorded by anyone.

Imam Muhammad bin Ahmad Az Zahbi (d. 1348) wrote, 'A *Hadith* which is not known to Ibn Taimiyya is not an authentic *Hadith*.' But even Ibn Taimiyya, renowned as a great religious scholar, failed to present an authentic *Hadith* to this effect. In his book he quotes a tradition, the authenticity of which he is not quite certain. Its wording is as follows, 'Anyone who abuses any of the prophets should be killed.' Ibn Taimiyya himself wrote of this *Hadith* that it was possibly fabricated, and that only if its authenticity were proved, could it serve as an argument that abusers of the prophets should be killed.

Now even 700 years after the publication of Ibn Taimiyya's book, no scholar has yet written about the source and authenticity of this tradition. In such a case it can be concluded with certainty that it is a fabricated *Hadith*. And a fabricated *Hadith* is worthless.

The above argument makes it clear that the Quran and *Hadith* have not given any command to kill an abuser of the Prophet.

According to a tradition, a poet belonging to a polytheistic tribe once came to the Prophet Muhammad in Madinah in order to express his thoughts on polytheism. This he did in the form of couplets. Before the age of the press, people generally gave expression to their thoughts in poetry. That is to say, poetry enjoyed the position of the media in those times. At that time in order to counter the poet, the Prophet sent for Hassan ibn Thabit, also a poet. When Hassan came to the Prophet, he said to him, 'Hassan, rise and answer this man.' Then Hassan stood up and answered him likewise, in the form of couplets.

Retaliating against the pen with the sword is not the way of Islam.

We find many such incidents in the life of the Prophet. This shows that if anyone says anything against Islam or the Prophet, the counter action will be at an equal level, that is, word for word and writing for writing. This shows that retaliating against the pen with the sword is not the way of Islam. Any such incident relating to the use of the pen against Islam is for Muslims an intellectual challenge: it is in no way an armed or violent challenge. On such occasions, the opposite party has to be satisfied with reasoning and arguments in peaceful ways. Satisfying the other party at an intellectual level must be the rule. Whereas, responding by resorting to violence can never be justified.



THE CONCEPT OF BIOLOGICAL EVOLUTION

THE concept of biological evolution is attributed to the British naturalist, Charles Darwin (1809–1882). On his bicentenary birth anniversary which was celebrated in 2009, his ideas were extensively covered in the media.

Jean Baptiste Lamarck had presented the concept of evolution in its elementary form before Darwin. However, the speciality of Darwin was that he presented the concept of evolution in a more organized manner.

What is the concept of evolution?

The Theory of Evolution proposes that all species of animals and plants developed from earlier forms by hereditary transmission of slight variations in genetic composition to successive generations.

The age of the earth is totally inadequate for man and other living species to have come into existence through the process of Evolution.

In his book, *The Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin wrote that life was first created by God in the form of a unicellular organism. Afterwards through mutations based on natural selection; which was a process of survival of the fittest, different life species came to be developed. Finally a developed creature like man came into existence. And all this took place on its own through a gradual evolutionary process.

Darwin had given God the position of 'The First Creator' (Prime Mover) in his book, but later supporters of the concept of evolution eliminated God's name altogether.

This entire process of the journey of evolution had taken place on the present earth but later research revealed that it is just not possible for an evolutionary journey of this kind to take place on Earth. For instance, the age of the earth is far less than what is required for an evolutionary process of this kind to reach a high stage of development as required for the evolution of man.

The concept of evolution presupposes that if one species evolves into another, it is due to biological changes, mutations. For instance, a goat-like mammal underwent innumerable changes generation after generation, until the accumulation of these changes, led to the production of a giraffe-like animal in the last stage of the goat's evolution. This long journey was marked by innumerable phases. However one small favourable change in the DNA structure of only one individual would require billions of generations; and the evolution of a complete sequence is clearly not possible in the time span since the formation of the earth.

Age of the Earth and Evolution

The age of the earth was not known in the times of Charles Darwin. But with the development of science and technology, the age of the earth has been ascertained with certainty. Geologists have calculated that the earth came into existence 4.5 billion years ago. Much of the earth was molten and extremely hot due to volcanism and frequent collisions with other bodies. Over time it cooled and water came into existence. According to geological studies, the first simple life forms appeared around 3.5 billion years ago. Photosynthetic life appeared 2 billion years ago and life remained mostly small and microscopic until about 580 million years ago, when complex multicellular life arose.

**There exists no planet favourable for life,
similar to earth, anywhere in the vast universe.**

Now, according to Darwin's supposition, man and other living species came into existence through a biological process. But the age of the earth is totally inadequate for this process. This evolutionary process can just not result in the evolution of man within 580 million years.

Panspermia

In the second half of the 20th century, when the age of the earth was discovered, biologists felt that their theory was not workable. Now they added another concept to evolution. They developed the theory that the initial form of life had come into existence on another planet, from where it travelled to the earth. The subsequent biological processes then took place on earth. This concept is termed 'Panspermia.'

After the Second World War came the age of space science and research. Spacecraft, satellites and space stations were built with newly

developed electronic instruments and telescopes, which were extremely powerful. Without the limiting effects of the earth's atmosphere, these space observatories were able to study and photograph remote parts of the universe that were hitherto not observed. But these studies revealed that there existed no planet favourable for life, similar to the earth, anywhere in the vast universe. Thus the concept of 'Panspermia' no longer held ground.

Explosive Evolution

Further research continues in an effort to resolve the issue of the limited time span required for the evolution of life as it is today. One other theory proposed to side step the issue of time is what could be called explosive evolution. This however, does not resolve the actual question regarding evolution. What it does, is provide a new technical term for the justification of the concept of evolution. The traditional concept of evolution was based on the principle of gradual mutations. That is, with slight variations over many successive generations, one species is changed into another. This concept of classical mutation was unable to answer the question as to how exactly this change occurred. For, no research has proved that these innumerable changes can occur gradually.

The popularity of the concept of Evolution is not due to the fact that it has been scientifically proved. Its cause certainly is traceable to the attempt at explaining life without the introduction of God.

This new theory now only makes a guess based on volcanic eruptions and claim that these evolutionary changes did not occur gradually but explosively. These scientists believe that just as volcanoes erupt all of a sudden, in the same way different forms of life appeared one by one through a series of explosions. It is only an attempt to solve the problem of a limited span for the evolutionary process by supposing that biological evolution has taken place as a form of explosion. One of the statements proposed in this theory is:

'These are like volcanoes in the genome, blowing out pieces of DNA.'

However, the actual problem still remains unresolved. This theory is only an attempt to explain genetic changes (mutation) based on supposition, rather than on an explanation of how innumerable

changes occurred within the limited age of the earth. In relation to the limited age of the earth, this is as inadequate as the ancient classical explanation. All that it says is that these changes are of an explosive nature rather than occurring as a gradual process. But even in the light of this theory, there still remains the question of the limitless age that is required for this process of countless changes to take place. Such an occurrence on our planet is just not possible. This concept of explosive evolution or evolution eruption is not based on any scientific discovery. It is again based on irrelevant suppositions, just like the theory of evolution initially formulated by Darwin.

Missing Links

There were many missing links in the concept of evolution. However, the researchers of the time supposed that these missing links would be discovered in time and on this supposition, the concept of evolution received general acceptance. The same is true of modern research in evolution in which there are a number of unknown links. By ignoring these missing links, evolutionists devised their modern concept on the basis of mere guesswork.

**There is an unbroken relationship between
God and man which continues at every moment
without any interruption.**

The concept of evolution supposes that living species have continually undergone repeated changes and that these changes came into existence by action and reaction in the environment. This evolutionary principle is called adaptation. It has been supposed that the changes that take place due to this adaptation get accumulated generation after generation and finally one species evolves into another.

However, no argument or example exists in favour of this supposed concept of adaptation. Some irrelevant examples are cited, but these examples are nothing but fallacies. Let us take the example of the moth, often cited by the evolutionists. Observations revealed that the moths who live in green trees turn green and the moths who live in hilly areas take on the colour of stones in that area.

This example does not prove the claim of evolutionists. What it proves, at best, is that environmental factors affect the external colour, like the white skin of people living in colder regions and the darker skin

of those living in hotter regions. The actual subject of discussion in relation to the theory of evolution does not pertain to the changes in the external colour of the body, but rather to the change in species. That is why the example of the moth does not prove the principle of any change in species.

Evolution being a gradual, continuous process, innumerable intermediate species should have lived during the periods between these transformations. Evolutionists refer to these creatures which they believe lived in the past as intermediates or 'transitional forms'. If such animals had really existed, there would be billions and their remains should necessarily show up in the fossil record.

**Just as man is dependent on God for his existence,
so is he totally dependent on God for his survival.**

Even Darwin accepted this fact and asserted that when the fossil record had been studied in detail the missing links would be found. But despite more than two hundred years of fossil collection and studies, the fossil record still does not yield the picture of infinitely numerous transitional links that are expected. It has become abundantly clear that the fossil record has not and will not confirm Darwin's prediction.

The truth is that the concept of biological evolution was an unscientific concept in 1859 when Charles Darwin's book was first published and today also it is equally unscientific.

It is claimed that the theory of biological evolution has gained general acceptance among the educated and elite in modern times. But as events unfold the popularity of this concept is not due to the fact that it has been scientifically proved. Its cause certainly is traceable to the attempt at explaining life without the introduction of God. Such people believe that they have found a workable theory in the form of the theory of evolution. Yet no real academic basis exists for the theory of evolution.

The Theory of Evolution and Religion

In the initial phase of the theory of evolution, the Christian Church had turned hostile to it but now probably due to the pressure of circumstance, the Christian Church has accepted its authenticity. One media report says:

The Vatican has admitted that Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution should not have been dismissed and claimed it is compatible with the Christian view of creation. According to a February 11, 2009 report in the *Telegraph*, Archbishop Gianfranco Ravasi, the head of the pontifical Council for Culture, said while the Church had been hostile to Darwin's theory in the past, the idea of evolution could be traced to St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. Father Giuseppe Tanzella-Nitti of the Pontifical Santa Croce University in Rome, added that the 4th century theologian St. Augustine had "never heard of the term evolution, but knew that big fish eat smaller fish" and forms of life had been transformed "slowly over time".

Such an opinion regarding the evolutionary theory has also been expressed by certain Muslim scholars, such as Sheikh Nadin Algir of Algeria, Pakistan's Mohammad Rajiuddin, etc. These people hold that the concept of biological evolution is not akin to the denial of God, for they believe in God being the first cause to have brought life into existence. They explain that even if life came into existence in accordance with the supposed evolutionary method, it was still the one God who initially brought life into existence.

The Theory of Evolution is in effect a negation rather than an affirmation of God.

But this explanation is not right. According to the religious viewpoint, the position of God for us is not just that of the first cause; God is rather continuously involved in our life. Religious belief holds that God is controlling the universe continuously. There is an unbroken relationship between God and man which continues at every moment without any interruption. Besides, God is the Reckoner and man is accountable to Him for each and every deed he performs on this planet.

On the Day of Judgement, God in his capacity as Master of the Day of Judgement will decide the eternal future of all human beings. All these positions of God get eliminated in the concept of evolution. In such a case, the concept of biological evolution can never be acceptable from the religious viewpoint.

The desired relation between man and God is that of a living relationship. This relation exists at all times and at every moment through the remembrance of God, prayer, worship, contemplation, reflection and

drawing lessons from God's signs, etc. Man asks God for blessings at every moment and he receives them from God at every moment.

Just as man is dependent on God for his existence, so is he totally dependent on God for his survival. If God ceased to sustain him even for a moment, man would be destroyed. In accordance with religious belief, God is not only the Creator but also the Sustainer. That being so, the theory of evolution is, in effect, a negation rather than an affirmation of God.



Some Make Themselves, Others Make History

*There are two types of people in this world —
the self-making type and
the history-making type.
The aim of those who are self-making
is to serve themselves,
whereas history-making people,
seek to serve humanity as a whole*

Team Work

*People have to be patient with one another,
putting other's needs before their own,
thinking of the good of others rather than
what they themselves desire.
It is through the sacrifice of individuals
that there can be such a thing
as concerted effort.*

FREEDOM IN THE CREATION PLAN OF GOD

THE stark reality of our existence in this world is that there is no ideal. There is no ideal world, ideal society, government, person or character. In this imperfect world, flaws are inherent. According to the Quran:

Man was created to see which of us is best in deed.

THE QURAN 67: 2

The very reason for our existence is this test. If it was a perfect world, there would be no test. A pre-requisite for this test is our freedom or free will given by God Almighty. This free will has given us the opportunity to create strife and conflict as well as peace, harmony and progress. Strife is the price we have to pay for free will.

Striving, sacrifice, giving and forgiving are only possible in an imperfect world. In an ideal world, these things do not exist. Life is not always fair. The injustices done by man against man and our reactions or responses of patience, anger, fighting, hope and prayer etc, are possible only in an imperfect world. Perfect justice and fairness towards even the smallest of deeds will only be achieved in the hereafter, where rewards and punishments are given depending on how we fare in the 'test' of life.

Then, whoever has done the smallest bit, of good will see it;
while whoever has done the smallest bit, of evil will see it.

THE QURAN 99: 7-8

As a feature of this 'test', man is created in a society where every person is different from the other. Every cell in one person is different from that of another. No two individuals are alike. These differences lead to different ideas, disagreements and divergence; generating challenges that lead to progress and intellectual development. Progress and development are a result of these differences and not in spite of them. Invariably this also leads to strife which has to coexist with progress. If this was not so, how could those individuals be selected who given the chance of conflict and oppression, choose peace and progress.

Come, let us discover our place and position in this creation plan of God.

ASSALAMU ALAIKUM

ISLAM teaches Muslims to greet people when they meet them, by saying '*Assalamu alaikum*' that is, peace be upon you. According to the Islamic code of behaviour, when a Muslim meets another person, he should greet him with these words: 'Peace be upon you', and the other person must say in return, 'Peace be upon you too.'

The greeting '*Assalamu Alaikum*' is a sacred covenant by which one leads a principled life.

We find a number of verses in the Quran and a great number of traditions or *Hadith* of the Prophet which enjoin believers to be generous in extending greetings to others. One verse which is quite specific about this says:

If a man greets you, let your greeting be better than his, or at least return his greeting. Surely God takes account of all things.

THE QURAN 4: 86

This is further elaborated upon in the Quran in the following verse:

You who believe, do not enter houses other than your own, until you have asked permission and saluted their inmates. This is better for you, so that you may be mindful.

THE QURAN 24: 27

Many traditions of the Prophet attach great importance to greetings. Here are some traditions on this subject:

According to one *Hadith*, the Prophet said: "The best of men to God is he who begins with a greeting." (MUSNAD AHMAD)

In the greeting '*Assalamu Alaikum*', *Salam* means peace. This term thus signifies, "Be sure that your life, property, and honour are safe in my hands." The reply '*Walaikumus Salaam*' also means the same, that is, you are also secure in my hands as regards your life, property and honour.

The greeting is completed by handshaking. Handshaking, a sign of love and affection, is also one of the ways (*sunnat*) of the Prophet.

The Prophet has also said: 'Greet those whom you know as well as those who you do not know.' (SAHIH BUKHARI)

The Prophet encouraged all to greet one another saying that it is a way of increasing love and affection amongst each other. (SAHIH MUSLIM)

This greeting is a form of prayer, for the true believer; having good feelings in his heart for others being their genuine well-wisher. He even keeps praying for them in his hours of privacy. As such—on meeting them, this inner feeling of well-wishing finds expression in the form of these words of greeting: "Peace be upon you."

**This greeting is a form of prayer for the true believer;
having good feelings in his heart for others
being their genuine well-wisher.**

The phrase '*Assalamu Alaikum*' is an indicator of the kind of life that an individual ought to lead in society, i.e. everyone must live in this world as the well-wisher of others, desiring peace and security for all. By greeting others with this phrase, one introduces oneself as just such a well-wisher, one from whom no harm may be expected. This greeting truly symbolizes an attitude of peace and goodwill towards all human beings.

The greeting '*Assalamu Alaikum*' is not a mere ritual repetition of certain set words. It is, in fact, a sacred covenant by which one leads a principled life. Its utterance is an indication that the speaker means to observe the spirit of this phrase—the spirit of peace and goodwill towards all.



Being patient

*Through patience you can turn your fortune around;
without patience you can expect nothing but failure.*

SOCIAL HARMONY

ONCE, a dispute arose between two farmers, over the boundary between their fields. To begin with, the dispute concerned a piece of land but soon developed into an issue of honour. Withdrawing their respective claims, they thought, amounted to losing face. Thus the quarrel which had started on a petty issue was blown up, out of all proportion, and neither party was willing to make a compromise.

Things went from bad to worse and took a violent turn leading to murders and destruction of their lands and property. Eventually the matter was brought to court. Judicial procedure was long and drawn out and the cases were brought to an end only when both the parties had lost everything in the process—family, fields, health and wealth. And all only in an attempt to recover something of much lower value.

It is more circumspect to seek out the root causes of problems; not there and then, in terms of the prevailing circumstances, but elsewhere.

In a comparable case, another farmer found himself in a similar situation. But, instead of taking immediate action, he chose to stop and give the matter serious consideration. He consulted his friends in order to determine what steps he should take. Finally he came to the conclusion that the boundary dispute should be settled not at the boundary, but on some other front.

He started to think over the issue; not in terms of today, but in terms of the past. Being deeply hurt at the usurpation of a part of his farm, he felt the same sense of dishonour and material loss as the men who had decided on quick action in the previous example.

How was it that his opponent had the daring to infringe upon his land, he thought. A great deal of cogitation led him to the conclusion that it was his own weakness that had emboldened his rival in this matter. Now, it was not so much a matter of a boundary dispute as it was of his position in society. His position being weak, he could not inspire sufficient awe in his neighbour to prevent him from laying hands on his rightful property. Thinking coolly, he arrived at the conclusion that

if he were able to improve his status, he would be better equipped to combat his opponent in a weapon-less battle. Then his rival would not venture to appropriate his rights.

So, having restrained the impulse to retaliate automatically, he began to work harder than before on his fields. The strength which would have been wasted on destroying the enemy was now utilized in constructive activities. Such positive thinking inspired in him new hope and courage. Not only did he work harder in his fields, but he started a business as well. His newly awakened consciousness had inspired in him a new zeal to construct his life afresh and cutting down on his expenses, he put all his efforts into increasing his income. In addition, he sent all his children to school and resolved to give them the best possible education.

**Confrontation should be avoided at all costs
and no factor which can produce positive results
should be rejected or ignored.**

Like the farmer in the first example who continued to fight with and sue his rival over a period of twenty years, this farmer too had to work for twenty years for his efforts to come to fruition. For the former, twenty years of effort had amounted to nothing but destruction, whereas, for the latter they meant a period of great achievement. His children having received a fine education were well employed. He himself had developed his farm so much that he had to buy a tractor to replace the pair of oxen which had formerly tilled his land. His resources had increased considerably. The very farmer who once had humiliated him, had sold all his land along with the disputed boundary area.

The above two contrasting cases present a good lesson for social harmony. The one who had wanted to settle the boundary dispute at the boundary was a loser; on the other hand, the one who tried to solve the problem on other fronts not only came to possess the disputed land but the whole field belonging to his opponent.

When an electric bulb or fan stops working, we do not devote our efforts only to the bulb or the fan to make them work again, because we know that the reason often lies outside the bulb and the fan. Simply by carrying out repairs at the proper place, we can set matters right. For example, by replacing a fuse, we can re-light the lamp and set the

fan in motion again. Human affairs too are often of this nature. But it is a pity that what one remembers in the case of material matters is often forgotten in solving social problems.

The normal practice, when a problem arises, is to attempt to solve it there and then in terms of the prevailing circumstances. But since present events so often stem from past events and circumstances, it is more circumspect to seek out the root causes elsewhere.

Confrontation should be avoided at all costs and no factor which can produce positive results should be rejected or ignored. Even if such an approach seems lengthy and complicated, it is the only process which can lead to harmonious living in society.



Charity

*Every good act is charity.
Your smiling to your brother is charity
an exhortation of your fellowman
to virtuous deeds is equal to alms-giving;
your putting a wanderer
on the right road is charity;
your assisting the blind is charity;
your removing stones, and thorns,
and other obstructions from the road is charity;
your giving water to the thirsty is charity.*

*A man's true wealth,
hereafter, is the good he does
in this world to his fellowmen.*

*When he dies, people will say,
"What property has he left behind him?"
But the angels will ask,
"What good deeds has he sent before him?"*

THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE QURAN

WHILE mentioning the Quran in his book, *'The History of the Arabs'*, Professor Philip Hitti has written: "The most impressive parts of the Quran deal with eschatology¹."

Sentiments of this nature are usually expressed by non-Muslims who read the Quran. They tend to be most impressed by verses dealing with life after death. So how strange it is that this is the very thing that Muslims derive least, from the Quran. Muslims see everything in the Quran, but they miss the Quran's main theme, a theme that recurs on every page.

The reason for this is that non-Muslims generally read the Quran with an open mind; they read it in order to find out what it contains. So they do not add or subtract from what they find within its pages. But this is not the case with Muslims. For the most part, Muslims seek either one of two things—grace or pride—when they read the Quran.

Some, seeing the Quran as the most holy scripture, just recite it in order to receive the grace of God. Then there are others who take pride in the Quran. They see it as the great book of the Muslim people, and read it out of this feeling of pride. It is only natural that such people should begin to see the Quran in the light of the times. They are sure that their glorious book must be a collection of the important issues of the day. Those who see Socialism as the major force of the age then read Socialism into the Quran. Those who deem science to be of overriding importance see the greatness of the Quran in the form of science. For those obsessed with law and politics, the most important discovery to be made in the Quran are statements dealing with these topics.

The truth is that the Quran is a book of eternity. It came to the world to warn man of the coming of the Last Day. It is a verbal Trumpet, blown before the actual Trumpet which will herald the arrival of that day. Successful are those who are awoken by this verbal Trumpet. When the real-life Trumpet is blown, it will profit no one to awake.

1. Noun: *Eschatology*, A branch of theology that is concerned with the final events in the history of mankind or final things such as death, judgement, heaven and hell; the ultimate destiny of humankind

IS SCIENCE IN PURSUIT OF GOD?

FROM Newton to Einstein, the basic pursuit of science was based on discovering the laws of nature. But in the post-Einsteinian era, the pursuit of science shifted from the discovery of laws of nature to the explanation of nature.

In the post-Einsteinian era, science discovered that the universe is not a haphazard world; it is a highly meaningful world, well-designed, and extremely harmonious. It appears that the universe is a centrally controlled universe.

**The universe appears to be centrally controlled.
There seems to be a master computer that
controls the working of the universe.**

Perhaps the first scientist who pointed out that there is a mathematical mind behind the universe was Sir James Jeans. Einstein spent a large part of his life searching for a 'unified field theory'. Then, Stephen Hawking introduced what is called single string theory which developed into the unifying M-Theory which is one of the candidates for a 'Theory of Everything'. Stephen Hawking originally believed that M-theory may be the ultimate 'Theory of Everything' but later suggested that the search for understanding of mathematics and physics will never be complete¹.

There are some scientists who believe in the existence of the Higgs Boson particle popularly known as the God particle, which is supposed to explain many questions about the nature of our universe. Recently, a scientist² declared that there is a 'master computer that controls the working of the universe'. This same thought is expressed by some scientists in these words that the 'universe is an intelligent universe' or of 'design' and 'fine-tuning' in the universe.

These ideas and theories are yet to be established by scientific criterion. To date, there is no general acceptance in favour of these theories. Scientifically speaking, if it is proposed as a theory; then it is

1. Stephen Hawking editor, 2005. *God Created the Integers: The Mathematical Breakthroughs That Changed History*

2. University of Washington, Professor Martin Savage

mathematically workable and research continues towards it, together with critiques and challenges against it. Scientists believe them to be working theories rather than established scientific fact.

But, these kinds of statements by different scientists reflect an important fact. That is, scientific pursuit has led scientists to a question: if the universe is centrally controlled, then who is the controller? Although there is no scientist who would dare to say there is a living controller and that controller is God, one can still say that present day science has confirmed the idea of God indirectly, albeit not directly.

**Nature is so comprehensible that it is
incomprehensible to believe that there is
no supreme power behind nature.**

Albert Einstein once said that the most incomprehensible fact about nature is that it is comprehensible. This statement from a scientist is not a simple statement. It reflects the dissatisfied mind of a scientist. If we rephrase this statement of Einstein, we can say that nature is so comprehensible that it is incomprehensible to believe that there is no supreme power behind nature.



The Secret of Progress

*A tree stands above the ground,
fixing its roots firmly beneath the ground.
It grows from beneath, upwards into the air;
it does not start at the top and grow downwards.
The tree is our teacher, imparting to us
the lesson of nature that
if we seek to progress outwardly,
we must first strengthen ourselves inwardly;
we must begin from the base of our own selves
before we can hope to build society anew.*

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

THE actual target of Islam is spiritual progress. For this, man's spirituality has to be awakened, and the divine feelings latent within him aroused. In the Quran, this — Islam's actual goal — is called 'purification and cleansing'. (THE QURAN 91: 9)

In actual fact, every person is born with an upright nature. In this respect, everyone, by virtue of his or her very birth, is pure and clean. But during his stay in this world he becomes sullied externally. What is meant by purification is for man to rid himself of this outer shell of moral grime and revert to the upright nature he was born with.

**Everyone, by virtue of his or her birth,
is pure and clean.**

This action of purification and cleansing has to be performed by the individual himself. A little child may be clean and pure on his own, but this state of purity is not due to some effort on his part, for he has been in this state from the moment of his creation. It is a different matter when he grows up. Then he must make himself clean and pure spiritually, by his own striving. It amounts to arriving consciously at the optimal stage of spiritual development by one's own will and efforts. It is this self-attained spiritual progress which is desirable in Islam. In the Quran it is called coming before one's Lord with a 'pure heart'. (THE QURAN 26: 89)

According to a *Hadith*, the Prophet observed while praying "May God fill my heart with light." Similarly, the Prophet once uttered these words, while praying for someone, "O God, forgive his sins and purify his heart." In the Muatta Imam Malik (*Hadith* collection) a saying of Luqman, the Wise is recorded in these words: "God revives the heart with the light of wisdom, just as he revives the dead earth with rains."

This 'purification of the heart' is called spiritual progress. And it is this spiritual progress which is the actual goal of Islam. Those who fail to make spiritual progress will certainly never become truly successful.



THE WORD OF GOD

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**

It is those who have faith, and do not mix their faith with wrongdoing, who will be secure, and it is they who are rightly guided. This is the reasoning We gave to Abraham against his people. We raise in rank anyone We please—your Lord is wise and aware. We gave him Isaac and Jacob, each of whom We guided as We had guided Noah before. Among his descendants were David and Solomon, and Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron. Thus do We reward the righteous. 6: 82 - 84

In this world there is only one Supreme Being—God, whose majesty and greatness are based on sound arguments. All other kinds of so-called greatness and the reverence for them are based on superstitious beliefs. God's supremacy stands by virtue of its own strength, while all other godheads owe their existence to the acceptance of their followers. If their followers refused to accept them, they would become nonexistent.

Looking to externals, the worshippers of these deities are misled into believing that they are more securely situated than the worshippers of the one and only God. But this is the worst type of misunderstanding. It is one who goes by sound arguments who is in the really safe position. But if it is by compromising with worldly considerations and customs that he attempts to better his situation, this has no value from the point of view of his final fate.

Sometimes the domination of false deities becomes so universal that even the worshippers of the real God are overwhelmed by it and make compromises. Worldly considerations and material interests are so closely linked with these false deities that, to all appearances, it seems that there is no other way to have a respectable life than to effect a compromise with the structure formed under them. But this

procedure amounts to such an adulteration of one's own faith that it makes one's sincerity doubtful in the eyes of God.

Zachariah, John, Jesus, and Elijah—every one of them was righteous—Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah, and Lot—We favoured each one of them above other people, and also some of their forefathers, their offspring, and their brothers: We chose them and guided them to a straight path. This is the guidance of God : He gives that guidance to whichever of His servants He pleases. If they had associated other deities with Him, surely all they did would have been of no avail. 6: 85 - 88

Excellence, or superiority, is not anyone's racial or national prerogative. It is a gift of God to only those individuals who keep themselves righteous according to God's guidance, who avoid all sorts of polytheism (*shirk*) and who throw themselves, body and soul, into the task of 'preaching (admonition) without remuneration.' These are the people who make the Book of God their real guide. They identify themselves with the Book to such an extent that the divine mysteries reveal themselves to them; the result of which process is known as wisdom (*hikmah*). These are the people whom God picks out, then commissions some of them, whom He likes, with the task of conveying His message, as prophets during the age of prophethood, and thereafter as *dayees*. God's reward either to prophets or *dayees* will be entirely on the basis of righteous action (*ihsan*).

The task of giving the call of Truth is undertaken only by those people who have become so selfless and so immersed in this work that they have no material expectations whatsoever of their addressees. Then the preacher cannot stage protests or run a campaign of demands pitted against the very person or group of persons to whom he is conveying the message of the Hereafter. Such an action on the part of the messenger of Truth would risk his exhortations being treated as ridiculous in the eyes of his addressees, and in society at large his call could never thus attain the status of a serious effort to convey the Word of God.

Those are the ones to whom We gave the Scripture, wisdom, and prophethood. If these people [the Makkans] reject it, We shall entrust it to a people who will never refuse to acknowledge it. Those [the previous prophets] were the people whom God guided. Follow their guidance then and say, 'I ask no reward for this from you: it is only a reminder for all mankind.' 6: 89 - 90

In Makkah, a few individuals had embraced the faith on the strength of the Prophet Muhammad's preaching. But, as a community, the people had rejected him. Thereafter, God the Almighty softened the hearts of the people of Medina towards his call; and they embraced the faith as a community; so much so that it became possible for him to go to Medina and establish a centre of Islam there. This aid from Almighty God was granted to the Prophet Muhammad in its complete form. However, God can give this aid even to the successors of the Prophet who rise to follow his call. This is something which God has always done according to the requirement of His *dayees*.

They do not make a just estimate of God, when they say, 'God has not revealed anything to any human being.' Say, 'Who revealed the Book which Moses brought, a light and guidance for the people, which you made into separate sheets, showing some but hiding many? You have been taught things that neither you nor your forefathers had known before.' Say, 'God has sent it;' then leave them toying away with their speculation. 6: 91

When the call of the Prophet Muhammad reached the people of Makkah, some of them asked certain Jews what they thought about it and whether God's Word had really been revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. The Jews replied that God had not made revelations to any human being. This is obviously very strange, because the Jews themselves accepted a series of prophets, thus tacitly admitting that God's word had indeed been revealed from time to time to human beings. But when a man blindly opposes anything, he will go to the extent of contradicting his own accepted ideas in the heat of attempting to defeat his opponent.



Meet the challenges

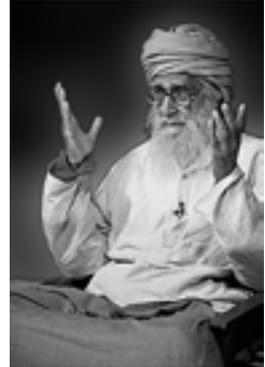
*Those who only blame the external factors
underestimate their own capacity.*

*Those who discover and develop themselves
become free of this obsession and can meet all challenges.*

ASK MAULANA

What is the difference between following an impulse and giving in to temptation?

Temptation is a negative term, while following your impulse can be positive. Allowing yourself to be guided by emotion can mean falling into temptation, whereas following your impulse means listening to reason. One is an emotional tilt, and the other is a rational decision.



How can we strike a balance between the material and the spiritual?

It is very easy. Follow the well-known principle: Simple living, and high thinking. This is the best formula for a spiritual life. Simple living saves you from distractions and high thinking enables you to discover the sublime aspects of nature or events.

To the young, freedom is the summum bonum, or greatest good. What is your opinion?

I subscribe to the concept presented by the American psychologist B. F. Skinner, in his book *Freedom and Dignity*, which is that — man cannot afford freedom. Total freedom leads to anarchy, and anarchy is not a workable system for any society. So, the best formula is that which is based on controlled freedom. Uncontrolled freedom is a negative freedom and controlled freedom is positive freedom.

Is it necessary to exercise restraint over our desires? If yes, how can we do this?

Our desires are unlimited, but our capacity is limited. Due to our limitations, we cannot fulfil all our desires. So, it is realistic to control our desires. If we fail to control our desires, we will fall into despair, and certainly no one can afford to follow a path which leads nowhere except to despair. It is a fact that controlling desires is a lesser evil and despair is a greater evil. And no one would prefer to involve himself in a greater evil.

Restraining desires is often associated with the stifling of personality development. Please comment.

This is a sheer fallacy. When unlimited desires cannot be fulfilled, trying to fulfil all desires will lead to a negative and not to a positive growth of the personality. Any scientific survey can disprove this kind of formulation.

Does prayer help in developing one's personality?

Yes. Prayer means trying to establish contact with the higher reality and the higher reality is the source of all kinds of inspiration. So prayer, if it is a true prayer, will certainly help to develop the personality of the individual, be it a man or a woman.

What is most dangerous for spiritual development?

In my experience, it is excessive concern for materialism. Material goods are a necessity. When you become greedy for material things, you take the risk of losing your spirituality.

Why is it difficult for man to accept his limitations?

The reason is that people generally do not apply their mind; they run after their emotions. If you apply your reason and think about the pros and cons, if you try to understand the result of your actions, then you will never forget that rational approach is the best approach and rational approach is based on your real situation. Reason will never allow to ignore one's own limitations.

How should we manage our ego?

It is very easy. It is said that when a peacock sees its beautiful feathers, it becomes proud, but when it sees its ugly legs, it becomes modest. The same is true of man. In every human personality there are plus points as well as minus points. Those who see their plus points become egoists, while those who see their minus points become modest. So, when a plus point comes to mind, turn your attention to the other side of your personality which has some minus point. And you will suddenly become a modest person. This is the easiest formula for maintaining modesty and avoiding arrogance.

Can man ever be free of negative feelings such as fear and doubt?

No. Negative feelings are not an evil. They also have their positive aspect. Negative feeling is a kind of shocking experience which awakens your mind; negative feelings make you able to reassess your plans, your mode of life. If you engage in introspection, negative feeling becomes a

great teacher for you, provided you do not allow your negative thoughts to overpower you.

What is the difference between adjustment and compromise?

There is great difference between the two. Adjustment is a principle of wisdom; it is the well-considered behaviour of a wise person; while compromise is a form of expediency, designed merely to secure your interests without following any principle.

We are often told that we should always remain hopeful. How different is this state of positive hopefulness from having false hopes? How can we differentiate between the two?

The difference between the two is very clear. A true hope is based on reality, while false hopes are based on unreal romanticism. When you examine the situation and adopt a well-considered position, you have the right to be hopeful but when you ignore the realities and adopt the posture of the ostrich, then you are entertaining false hopes.

Please send your questions to
askmaulana@thespiritofislam.org



Motion and Direction

One intrinsic quality of activity is movement. But in what direction?

Are you moving towards your destination, or away from it?

The actual motion in both cases seems to be no different in quality.

The great difference between the two is that

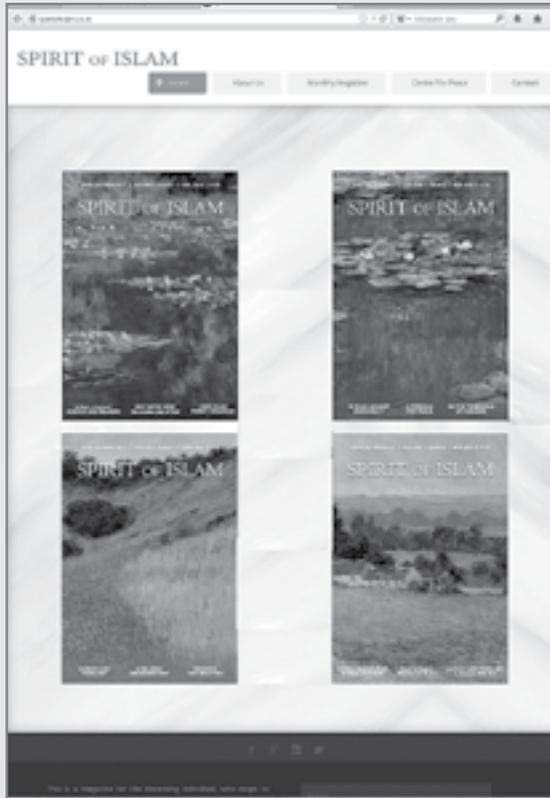
*the former brings you ever nearer to your destination,
while the latter takes you further and further away from it—
leading you to nowhere.*

It is direction that is all-important.

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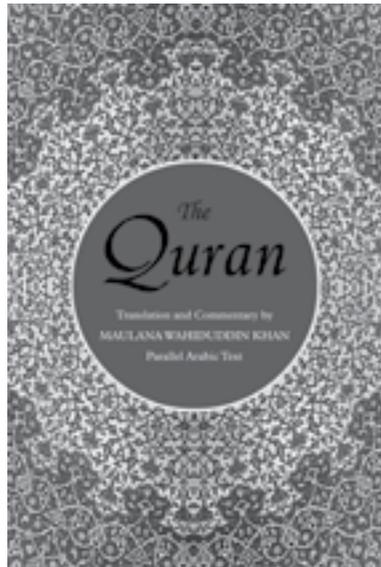
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