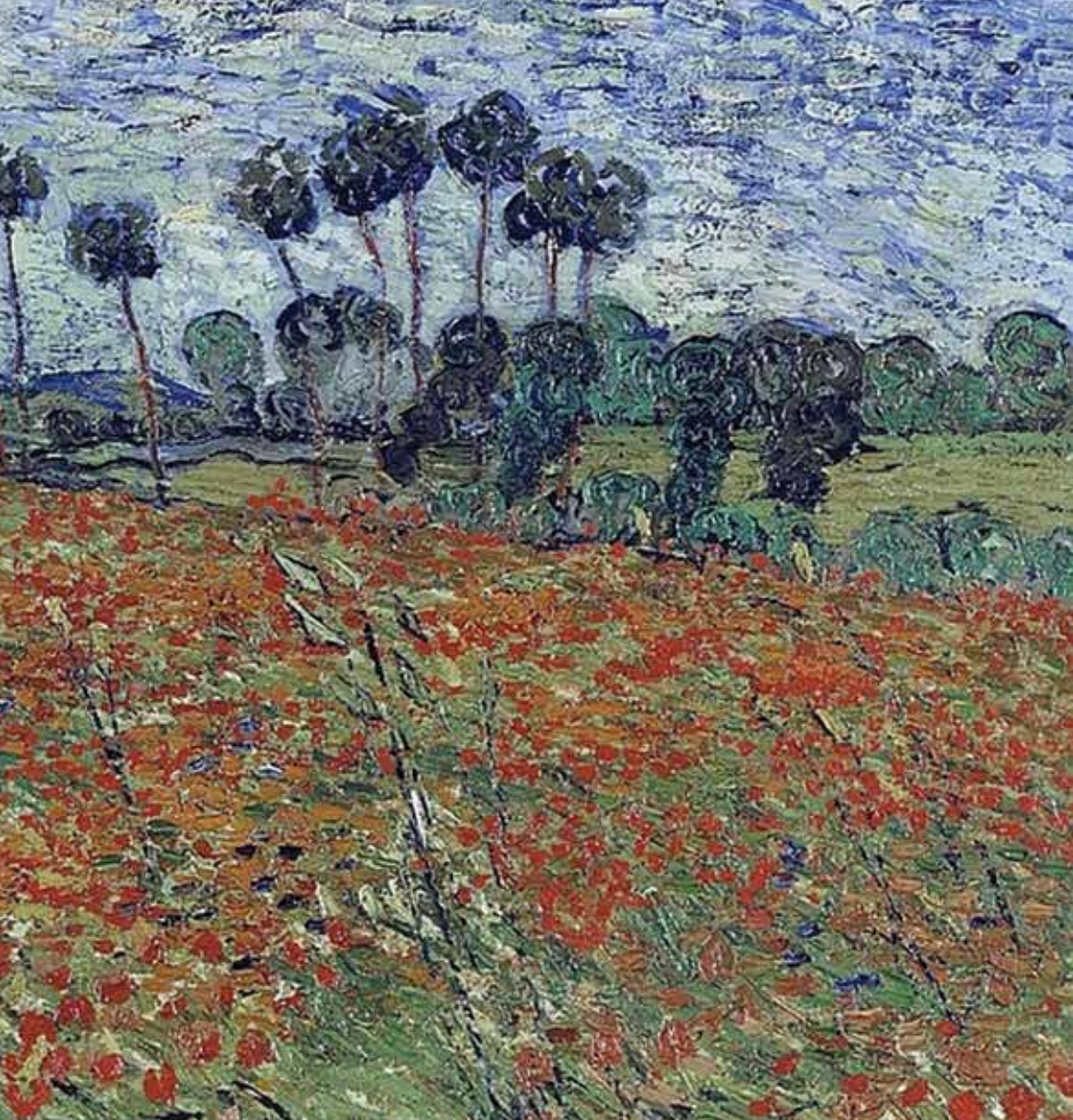


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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

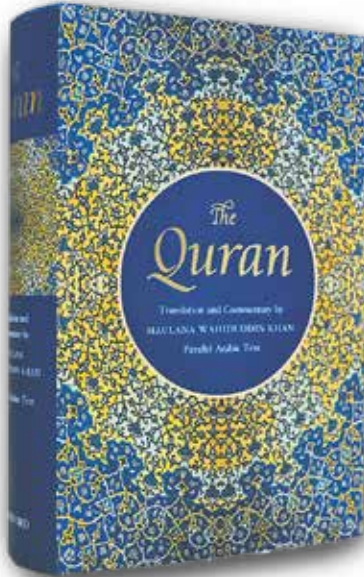


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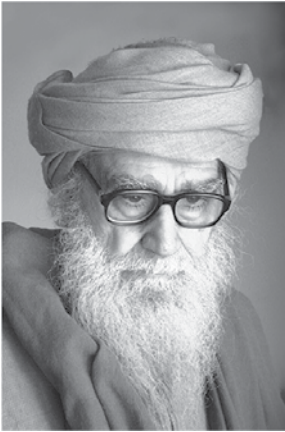
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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 Demiurgus Peace International Award and Sayyidina Imam Al Hassan Peace award for promoting peace in Muslim societies. 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.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE LAST 100 YEARS

Positive Aspirations

BORN in 1925, I have personally witnessed almost a century of the Indian subcontinent's history. The last 100 years was a period of momentous developments for this part of the world. This period saw the emergence of many 'towering' personalities, but in terms of helping the people of the region progress constructively and in a positive way, they have by and large failed miserably.

In the early 20th century, the Khilafat Movement took India by storm. Many 'big' Muslim leaders were behind it—people like Mohammad Ali, Shaukat Ali, Abul Kalam Azad, and many others. In the period between the two world wars, the movement was at its peak and it seemed that it had completely shaken the country. But the end result of the movement was one big zero. This was because it was based only on emotionalism. Its zealous leaders had no inkling that the movement for the restoration of the Ottoman Caliph in Turkey (that they were so passionately spearheading in India) had died out ten years earlier in Turkey itself! The secularism of the Turkish leaders, on the one hand and the growing

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

appeal of nationalism among the Arabs, on the other, gave a final burial to the Ottoman Caliphate. In such a situation, the movement for the restoration of the Caliphate was as pointless as trying to bring a dead man back to life, as people who had the vision to see things at that time well knew.

It is astoundingly incomprehensible that while the headquarters of the Ottoman Caliphate (including much of the Arab world) was Turkey, the movement for its restoration was launched in far-off India, which had no link with it political or geographical. But this is precisely what happened, and the Muslims of India made immense sacrifices of their lives and wealth for the movement. Had they sacrificed all this for their own constructive progress, it would have helped improve their conditions greatly.

Stranger still is that the hugely popular leaders of the Khilafat Movement seemed to have no idea that an international political institution like the Ottoman Caliphate could not be established through thunderous speeches and emotion driven writings. An institution of this sort always comes into being through historical causes and factors. History is like a bank. A community or people who have stored their assets in the 'bank of history', are the ones in a position to withdraw from it. A community that lacks the vision or insight will get nothing from this 'bank'.

The establishment of the Turkish Caliphate was no sudden event. Rather, the Turks had, over a period of centuries, developed a political 'asset' in the 'bank of history'. Turk leaders then 'encashed' it in the form of the Ottoman Caliphate. Unfortunately the 'assets' that the Ottoman Turks had deposited in the 'bank of history' dried up towards the end of the 19th century resulting in the collapse of, the Ottoman Caliphate.

From Syed Jamaluddin Afghani (d. 1897) to Abul Kalam Azad (d. 1958), several great Muslim personalities egged Muslims on to sacrifice their lives and wealth in the name of the protection of the Caliphate. They should have known that this was not a matter of protecting a political tradition. It was about ushering in a new history. Muslims lacked the 'assets' in the 'bank of history' for establishing an international political institution. In such a situation, spearheading a movement to establish an institution like the Ottoman Caliphate was like expecting a rocky, barren patch of land to magically transform itself into a lush garden!

Other movements also emerged during the movement for independence from British rule. Two are of particular relevance in the context of our discussion: the Hindu revival movement, and what can be called a movement for Muslim revivalism. Gauging from their fiery leaders, these

movements appear to have been influential, but in terms of results, they produced nothing of value. In fact, their results were completely counter-productive. For example, under Mr. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the movement for Muslim revival succeeded in achieving its goal of a separate state for Muslims in 1947. But this 'success' was, in every sense, absolutely unreal. Even before the creation of Pakistan, for all practical purposes—Muslim-majority regions—'Pakistan'—already existed. The contribution of the Muslim revivalist movement leaders was merely to affix the name 'Pakistan' to the former Muslim-majority parts of India. The futility of this movement was further driven home in 1971 when Mr. Jinnah's lament of a 'truncated Pakistan' was further exacerbated with the emergence of Bangladesh, leaving Pakistan weakened.

There were many big names associated with the Hindu revivalist movement—B.S. Moonje, V. Savarkar, Dr. Hedgewar, Guru Golwalkar etc. Many impressive organizations emerged from this movement—for instance, the Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which won considerable support among the Hindus. The Bharatiya Janata Party, which has close ideological and organisational links with the RSS, is today the governing political party in India. Hindu nationalist parties have been active over the years enjoying political power at the state and central levels. But, even Hindu commentators acknowledge that they have been unable to steer the country in the direction of construction and progress.

Meant to solve the Hindu-Muslim problem, the natural consequence of the Partition was only to further worsen the conflict.

Partitioning India on the basis of religion in the hope of solving the Hindu-Muslim problem proved to be no solution at all. Looked at from any angle, including religion, this was a disaster, the result of destructive politics.

From the Islamic point of view, Partition had no justification at all. Islam is a universal religion that addresses the whole of humanity. It is not a mere philosophy. Rather, it is a missionary and revolutionary religion. It does not aim to create insurmountable walls between Muslims and non-Muslims by manufacturing a fictitious 'two-nation theory', the theory that Muslims and non-Muslims are two separate and opposing nations—which is Pakistan's official ideology.

Despite this, the movement for the Partition of India gathered pace, and the country's Muslims lent it their support. In their unthinking

emotionalism, the supporters of this movement declared, 'What Does Pakistan Mean? [It Means] 'There is No God But Allah!' But the fact is that the Pakistan movement was an entirely communal, and not a religious movement. It had nothing whatsoever, directly or indirectly, to do with bearing witness that there is no god but God, the testimony of faith in Islam.

Meant to solve the Hindu-Muslim problem, the natural consequence of the Partition was only to further worsen the conflict. Prior to Partition, this conflict was between two communities. Following the Partition, it transformed into a conflict between two established states. And, as a result, the conflict grew much worse than it was ever thought possible in pre-Partition times.

The Partition led to the creation of artificial boundaries cutting all links between both sides of the border. Communications dried up. Long-established trade routes were suddenly closed. The partitioned countries diverted their precious resources to put each other down. Their primary concern at international meetings was to attack and condemn each other and to hurt each other's interests. They went to war on several occasions, and have now launched a mutually-destructive nuclear arms race, which was tantamount to economic suicide for both. Neither India nor Pakistan can afford the cost of this senseless race. They are willing to accept the domination of other powers, with whose help, they could decimate each other. But under no condition, it seems, are they willing to reconcile.

Prior to the Partition, the Hindu-Muslim conflict was between two communities. Following the Partition, it transformed into a conflict between two established states.

Even today, the basic situation remains unchanged. The entire South Asian region is volatile. This has taken a toll on constructive and meaningful progress in the region. I am an incurable optimist, but the situation is so stark that my optimism appears to be no longer based on realities, but, instead, on the aphorism—'that no matter how long the night may be, the morning is sure to dawn'.

I am 90 years old now and have little hope to see any new future for the Indian subcontinent. Yet, there are some thoughts that I wish to share which I think are essential for a new, constructive beginning for our part of the world.

I believe that India, Bangladesh and Pakistan must form a joint federation under which whilst fully preserving the independence of these three states, their mutual relations will be relaxed. For instance, visa-free travel should be allowed between these countries, as is the case with various Arab countries or in the European Community. Free trade between these countries should be allowed, as well as educational and cultural exchanges.

It is true that these three countries have certain bilateral problems that have been unresolved for decades—a destructive situation for all of them. These issues must be addressed on priority and cannot be ignored any longer. The general approach must be to solve such problems on the basis of acceptance of the status quo.

Given the current political relations, these countries spend much of their precious economic resources on defence or preparations for war. As a result, the entire region is mired in horrific economic and educational backwardness. This warrants an immediate solution. The race towards destruction must be replaced by a race towards constructive progress.

A major reason for the mutually destructive policies of these countries is 'religious politics'. Let us not deceive ourselves: this 'religious politics' is a masquerade for the politics of power and pelf in the guise of religion.

It has been rightly said, 'Politics is the art of the possible'. In the present conditions, the only feasible politics is what is called 'secular politics'. The state or political activities must focus only on those aspects that are of common, secular or of worldly concern—for instance, promoting literacy, economic development, proper use of natural resources, ensuring high-quality infrastructural facilities and establishing peace. Let every religious group have the freedom to act on the teachings of its faith, provided their religious activities do not become a problem for others. On the condition that they remain within peaceful limits, every person should enjoy religious freedom and live in peace and harmony with each other. □

A major reason for the mutually destructive policies of these countries is 'religious politics' which is only a masquerade for the politics of power and pelf in the guise of religion.

Maulana Wahiddudin Khan
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AS YOU SOW, SO SHALL YOU REAP

A Good Harvest

HUMAN life is divided into two periods—the pre-death period and the post-death period. The limited period before death is a test period for us and the eternal period after death is to receive reward or punishment depending on our performance in the test. Those who qualify will be rewarded with Paradise, and those who fail will be sent to Hell.

This is the scheme of creation as devised by the Creator. The goal of creation is to select those people fit to inhabit the world of Paradise. The evil that people do creates the environment required for testing and selecting those who will inhabit Paradise. On completion of this test period there will be no need for the existence of this world or of those who have failed in the test. The only thing that will remain will be Paradise and those who have been selected to reside in it.

To make people aware of this plan, the Creator has made elaborate arrangements. Firstly, a deep consciousness of this has been placed in human nature itself. It is common experience that total fulfilment cannot be found in the present world. Everyone leads a discontented life and leaves the world in this same state. This general discontentedness is a reminder to everyone that their destination lies somewhere else; that their desired world is not the world before death and that they should strive to find it in their life after death.

The Creator has made this world such that no one can find a life of comfort here. It is riddled with problems, diseases, accidents, boredom and all kinds of unpleasant situations, until death finally overcomes one within a short span of time. These are repeated reminders of the fact that man cannot build a world of his dreams in this ephemeral abode; that this world is decisively insufficient for the fulfilment of his desires. This unpleasant situation compels him to continue the search for reality.

The sufferings of some stand as lessons to others. There are some who are paralyzed and confined for life to a wheel-chair; others suffer from incurable diseases losing all charm in life. These are the Creator's sign-posts exposing the transitory nature of life in this world. They are reminders that it is just not possible for us to build a world of our own choice in this life.

Those who play the role of God's sign-posts appear to be in great suffering. But there is good news for them. On the Day of Judgment their deeds will be accepted by God. They may not have been able to perform great deeds, but their patient and silent suffering will be accepted by God. Patience and willingness to endure what God had destined for them will alone suffice to gain entry into Paradise.

The knowledge of this reality is not alien to man. Through different sources, man has come to understand that he cannot build a world of his choice in this life span; that whosoever performs good deeds will be able to find a world of his choice only in Paradise, in the life span after death. Paradise will be built in the next world, but the heavenly personality that will inhabit Paradise is to be built in this world.

What is Paradise? This world a miniscule model, is in a sense, an introduction to Paradise. Paradise is in fact, the perfect version of the present world. All the blessings of the present world will be available in the heavenly world, the difference being that the present world is imperfect, while the world of Paradise is total perfection; this world is far from ideal but the heavenly world will be an ideal world; the present world is ephemeral, while the world of Paradise will be eternal.

This world and Paradise are worlds apart. There is fear and grief in the present world, pollution and all kinds of suffering. In Paradise, there will be no fear, no grief, no pollution, or suffering. Paradise will have no limitations or boundaries; this world is full of limitations and disadvantages. Man will have a sense of absolute fulfilment in Paradise, whereas, in this present world no one can enjoy this sense of fulfilment.

Hell is a place quite opposite of Paradise. The sufferings and disadvantages we experience in our lives in this world will be all brought together.

The period before death is the period of sowing the seeds, while the period after death is for reaping the harvest.

The periods before death and post-death are linked and can be compared to the sowing and reaping of the harvest. The period before death is the period of sowing the seeds, while the period after death is for reaping the harvest. "As you sow, so shall you reap" is an eternal principle that applies to the life span after death as it does to the life before death. □

UNNECESSARY COMPLAINTS

Ride The Waves Of Challenge

THE British MP, Enoch Powell (d. 1998) once made an interesting comment about political leaders who complain about the media. He felt that such complaints were unnecessary or unjustified. "A politician who complains about the media", he said, "is like a ship's captain complaining about the sea."

This comment is absolutely true. However, it applies not just to political leaders but to all people. Most complaints against others are needless. While the issue is actually not something to complain about, it has been turned into a cause for one.

***Challenges are
for our own good.
They come into
our lives to train us;
to increase our
wisdom and to
strengthen us.***

This world is established on the principles of nature. Life in this world is like a vast ocean, full of waves. Living in society, we will always face one wave after another. The sensible way to deal with the waves that appear in our lives is to consider them as challenges. Instead of complaining about the waves that come our way, we should learn the art of successfully riding over or bypassing them.

That we have to face many waves or challenges in life is not something bad or wrong. In fact, challenges are for our own good. They come into our lives to train us; to increase our wisdom and to strengthen us. Difficulties are experiences, and without such experiences one cannot become a complete person. We should learn lessons from our experiences and stop complaining about them. □



Live as a flower

Spiritual behaviour is friendly behaviour towards every human being—to friends and foes alike. It is like the behaviour of flowers that can live with all their fragrance in the neighbourhood of thorns.

THE PRACTICE OF SATAN

Disagreement To Rebellion

ACCORDING to the Quran, at the time of the creation of Adam, Satan showed dissent with God's creation plan. Satan did not let these 'disagreements' with God remain at the level of a difference of opinion, but took it further towards rebellion against God. He made a rebellious plan to turn all of mankind against God. This is quoted in the Quran in the following words:

Satan said (to God), 'Because You have led me astray, I will lie in ambush for them (mankind) on Your straight path: then I will surely come upon them from before them and from behind them and from their right and from their left, and then You will find most of them ungrateful'. (THE QURAN 7: 16-17)

There are two ways of dealing when differing with others. One is to keep differences as a personal disagreement and limit them to a personal level. The other method is to escalate the differences to discord and enmity, spreading negative propaganda and becoming an enemy of the person. The first method of dealing with differences is acceptable, but the other method is following the practice of Satan. Those who do so are at risk of being included with the 'devil's partisans' in the court of God. (THE QURAN 58: 19)

It is natural for man to have differences with others. But to create false or negative propaganda against others; to prevent others from supporting them; to try to destroy their means of livelihood; to target their faith and intentions; to falsely accuse them of wrongdoing—all these are following in the footsteps of Satan. Those who do so, are undoubtedly the followers of Satan even if they package their case in the most 'religious' terms. □



Missionary Spirit

What inspires a man more than anything is to have a great mission before him. That is what arouses a man's hidden potential. It makes him a peak performer.

TOWARDS GLOBAL PEACE

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. Peace is the only religion for both man and the universe. It is the master-key that opens the doors to every success. Peace creates a favourable atmosphere for success in every endeavour. Without peace, no positive action—small or big—is at all possible.



ISLAMIC PACIFISM

A Practical Model Of Peace

SOME years ago, American forces organised a military operation and killed Osama bin Laden. Both when alive and when he was killed, there was much talk about him.

Lessons contained in any incident or event are always of interest. What one learns from this event is that militancy is clearly no option at all for anyone—for an individual, a group, a country or a superpower. Why? Because something that does not produce any result cannot be an option at all.

Osama staged a massive operation through his Al-Qaeda network. It was the biggest act of terror that the world had ever seen—planes crashing into the Twin Towers in New York. No one had ever heard of such daring terror before. Despite this unprecedented terror operation America remains just as it was. Its strength unimpaired. For its part, America organized a big, well-planned operation. It identified Osama's hideout in Pakistan and managed to kill him. But killing Osama the individual did not put an end to the 'Osama phenomenon'. Osama is dead, but his ideology is still alive, and acts of terror continue.

What is the lesson from this? As mentioned earlier, violence is no option at all—for anyone, individual or a state. It only results in greater destruction, greater evil, and nothing else. History testifies to this. Yet strangely, violence has been present throughout human history.

There is much talk today—as before—about peace and pacifism. That we need an ideology of peace is something every sensible person acknowledges. But where is that practical ideology of peace? People often say, “We must have peace. War is such a bad thing.” True, but for this we need a workable ideology of peace, one that will effectively rule out any and every justification to resort to war.

People think injustice leads to war, and that, therefore, those denied justice should first be given justice for peace to prevail. This is a flawed concept. You may think you have given justice to someone, but he may not think he has received his just due. And so, he will remain dissatisfied and disgruntled and can easily take to violence. This demand for ‘just peace’ cannot work. It can never result in peace.

The only way to establish peace is to work for peace for its own sake, unconditionally, and not link it with justice or human rights or anything else. Agreeing unilaterally to peace will open doors to many opportunities to progress. Availing these opportunities, one can obtain all those things including justice.

This is the only workable formula for peace and also the formula that Islam recommends. Islam is an ideology of peace and presents this eminently workable formula for peace, yet strangely, Muslims have failed to understand this or convey it to others.

The Prophet and his companions embodied the Islamic model of peace, but soon after their time, derailment set in among Muslims, so much so that even today Muslims are engaged in violence, which they have wrongly named as ‘*jihad*’. According to a *Hadith* (words of the prophet) report, the Prophet Muhammad said that in the later period, a group among his *ummah* (followers) would consume wine. When asked why they would do so (when God has expressly forbidden it), the Prophet said that these people would give a new name to wine and declare it lawful. (*Al-Darimi*)

***But killing Osama
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Osama is dead, but
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That is what some Muslims have done in the case of terrorism, too. They have sought to declare terrorism as legitimate by calling it ‘*jihad*’ and making it permissible. This is a case of repackaging something unlawful as lawful by giving it a fictitious name.

The Prophet was born in 570 CE in Makkah and started his mission in 610 CE. The chapter *Al-Muddaththir* in the Quran was among the early revelations received by the Prophet. At the start of this chapter, God addresses the Prophet thus:

O, you, wrapped in your cloak, arise and give warning!
Proclaim the glory of your Lord; purify your garments; shun
uncleanness; do not bestow a favour in the expectation of
receiving more in return; and for the sake of your Lord, be
patient. (THE QURAN 74: 1-7)

Patience or *Sabr* is not defeatism nor is it a passive attitude. Patience means to think over issues in a cool and calm manner—without resorting to reaction, to resentment, to hate or, to revenge. It is engaging in positive planning. At the very outset, this was told to the Prophet. How amazing! The Quran (4: 128) also says *as-sulh khair* or ‘reconciliation is best’. *Sulh* means ‘peace’, and *as-sulh khair* indicates that a peaceful settlement of disputes is the best. This clearly indicates the importance of the peaceful method in Islam.

Another Quranic verse says: “Let them not dispute with you on this matter” (22: 67). This means that Muslims should not give others an opportunity to dispute with them. The Arabic style of expression used in this verse means that they should not give their opponents a chance to enter into controversy with them. For example, in Arabic it is said: *La yadribannaka Zaydun*. This phrase literally means that ‘Zayd should surely not beat you’. However, the sense implied in this sentence is: ‘You should surely not give Zayd an opportunity to beat you.’ Believers should adopt a course of action that does not lead to confrontation but seek to maintain an environment of peace. Why? Because without this, it is not possible to call people to God. These two Quranic verses (4: 128 and 22: 67), tell us the path we should adopt.

Life involves facing situations that you will not like, are unpleasant for you and will be against your desires. Differences are a part of nature. Given that problems are bound to appear, what should we do?

What we should do is to learn to manage problems, rather than fight them. This is the formula that Islam gives—manage problems, rather than seek to fight them or try to eliminate them. This is also the formula of pacifism. Many people hope for a problem-free life. They want injustice and oppression to be completely eliminated. Only

then, they say, can there be peace. This is Utopian thinking and will never happen. And then what do these people do? They establish organizations in the name of peace. Some even pick up weapons in the name of attaining 'just peace'. Others bring crowds into the streets to shout and demonstrate in the name of peace. Such an approach creates many problems. Like physical violence, this 'street activism', too, produces agitation. It produces agitated minds. It fills people's minds with hate, with the 'us-versus-them' mind-set. It is based on opposition to others, on the belief that others are oppressors and that you are oppressed, that others have deprived you of your rights and that therefore you need justice, else there will be no peace.

Violence is no option at all—for anyone, individual or a state. It only results in greater destruction, greater evil, and nothing else. History testifies to this.

Whether someone picks up a gun or engages in street activism, bringing people into the streets, mobilising crowds and engaging in the politics of sloganeering, it is all the same thing. Neither of these methods is condoned in Islam. The Prophet never adopted a policy of agitation, of demonstrations, of slogans even though he faced many problems. This formula of 'just peace' can never work; it can never bring about peace. Why? Because there are bound to be problems in this world since this is a part of God's creation plan itself.

Differences between people will always exist. People are bound to get hurt by other's attitudes and behaviour. All these are included in God's creation plan. So, learn to accept problems as part of life. Recognise that you cannot eliminate problems. All you can do is to manage them.

According to a *Hadith* report, the Prophet said:

"God grants to rifq (non-violence) what He does not grant to unf (violence)". (Abu Dawood)

The Prophet of Islam was an embodiment of this principle. In his years as a prophet in Makkah, he faced innumerable challenges. He was persecuted. His companions were beaten. He was boycotted. His opponents made it difficult for him to stay on in the town. But in this entire period of 13 long years never did he engage in agitation, nor take out a demonstration or start a fight. When the number of Muslims grew, some of Prophet's companions suggested that they fight to end

oppression. But the Prophet did not allow this. He told his companions that he had not been given permission to fight, and he exhorted them to keep patience. That is, he advised them to solve the problems they were facing through patient planning. This is what is called 'problem management'.

Look at how the Prophet managed problems. The Prophet's opponents in Makkah plotted to kill him, thinking it would solve the challenge that his mission posed to them. And when this was decided in the tribal parliament, the Dar al-Nadwa, what happened? At night, the Prophet silently came out of his house, took Abu Bakr—a childhood friend and Companion—with him, and left Makkah for Madinah so that there could be no chance for confrontation.

This was a way of managing a challenging situation. Had the Prophet announced and left Makkah, had he left in the day time instead of at night, had he left the town after having a quarrel or argument with those who opposed him, it would have caused a confrontation. You, too, must learn how to avoid confrontation and manage problems that you will face in your life. The basic principle to bear in mind is that peaceful settlement of problems is the best way. '*As-sulh khair*', as the Quran says.

The Quran advises not to give others the chance to enter into confrontation with you. It takes two hands to clap. If you refuse to raise your hand to strike against someone there will not be a clap! Likewise, avoid anything that might give others the opportunity or excuse to resort to violence. That also means that you should not engage in violence yourself.

Years of persecution in Makkah made the Prophet shift to Madinah. Never did he utter a word against the oppression of the Makkans. But what do most people do? They rant and rave against their 'oppressors'. They complain about human rights' violations and injustice. These days, a new buzzword is 'internationalisation'. People now go about internationalising their alleged persecution. Some Muslim groups have placed their people in Europe and America to 'internationalise' issues, such as that of Kashmir and Palestine. But all this was not the method of the Prophet. The hue and cry about 'persecution' and the 'internationalising' of these issues further exacerbates existing problems.

Never did the Prophet resort to such methods. Not once in his life in Madinah did he ever speak against the Makkans. But because they were polytheists and considered the Prophet's message of *tawhid* or the oneness of God to be a threat, they took to the offensive by unleashing battles against him. But the Prophet managed these battles in such a way that they turned into mere skirmishes. All the so-called *ghazwas* (wars) which the Prophet fought were actually skirmishes, not wars. They began in the afternoon and ended the same evening. This is by no means a 'war'. Wars are like the First and the Second World War. The 'battles' of Badr and Uhud that the Prophet engaged in which lasted half a day, were only skirmishes.

Why did they turn out to be skirmishes when the Makkans wanted to unleash war? The Makkans attacked, in the hope of fighting, but the Prophet's wise management with his peaceful policy, transformed them into mere skirmishes. Take, for instance, the Battle of Khandaq also called the 'Battle of the Trench'. But how was it a battle? An army of Makkans 12,000 strong advanced towards Madinah. When the Prophet came to know of this—keeping himself informed was part of his management system—he took his companions and arranged for a trench to be dug around the portion of Madinah that was open to attack. The Makkans arrived at the trench, laid siege there for a fortnight and then returned. There was no fighting. This is another example of the Prophet's method of problem management.

Believers should adopt a course of action that does not lead to confrontation but seek to maintain an environment of peace.

Yet another example of the Prophet's policy of pacifism is his peace negotiations with the Quraysh. The Quraysh, the most influential tribe in Arabia, were opponents of the Prophet. The Prophet entered into talks with them at a place called Hudaibiya until they finally agreed to a peace treaty. However, the Quraysh laid down some conditions that weighed heavily against the Muslims. For instance, a clause of the treaty said that if after the signing of the treaty a Makkan accepted Islam and went to Madinah, he would have to be sent back to Makkah. There were several other conditions like this.

On the paper on which the text of the treaty was written, the Prophet was referred to as 'Muhammad, the Prophet of God', but the Makkans objected to this. As they did not believe he was a prophet of God,

they demanded that the phrase 'Muhammad, the Prophet of God' be replaced by 'Muhammad, son of Abdullah'. The Prophet's companion Ali, who was writing the treaty on paper, was not ready to do this. Then, the Prophet erased these words with his own hands and agreed to write 'Muhammad, son of Abdullah'. This peace treaty of Hudaibiya was another brilliant instance of the Prophet's management of problems.

There are no hard-and-fast rules for managing problems. It is dependent on the situation, requires discernment and an open mind while choosing the course of action. With wisdom determine what needs acceptance or rejection in order to avoid confrontation.

Scholars generally define peace as the absence of war. Peace is a positive term, so why give it a negative definition? The right definition of peace must have a positive content which is the presence of opportunities. So, a more comprehensive definition of peace is: a state of the absence of war and the presence of opportunities. When peace is established, opportunities will emerge. Availing these can lead to growth and progress. That is what happened in the wake of the Hudaibiya no-war treaty. It led to increased, peaceful interaction between Muslims and others, enabling them to learn about Islam. In a mere two years, a large number of people entered the fold of Islam, and when the Prophet marched towards Makkah 10,000 companions accompanied him. This event was predicted in the Bible. 'He came with ten thousands of saints' (Deuteronomy 33: 2), the Bible says. This is the miracle of peace.

The Prophet then sent letters to the rulers of lands adjacent to Arabia and dispatched envoys to different tribes in Arabia to convey the message of Islam. Entire tribes embraced Islam, another miracle of peace. In this way, the Prophet provided a model and an ideology of peace. Following this he established some very important principles to maintain peace, two of which are mentioned here. One relates to internal revolt or *khuruj*, rebellion against an established government. The Prophet declared this to be haram or unlawful in Islam. He laid down that once a government is established in a country, one must accept it.

This was not meant to encourage a passive attitude. If you do not rebel against a government, you will engage in peaceful work, such as inviting people to God, promoting education, running businesses etc. The political field is just one of hundred fields, and you still have opportunities to work in the remaining ninety nine. But if instead, you

involve yourself in that one political field; all work in the remaining fields comes to a complete halt. That is why the Prophet declared revolt against an established government to be unlawful.

This issue is so important that in his commentary on the *Sahih Muslim* (a collection of traditions attributed to the Prophet), the 13th century Islamic scholar Imam al-Nawawi, while asserting revolt (*khuruj*) as unlawful, says that if you have differences with the ruler, then you should personally communicate with him. That is, take an appointment with the ruler and engage in a one-to-one conversation with him. He adds that as far as *khuruj* against the ruler is concerned, it is haram or unlawful according to the consensus of the religious scholars. Even if the ruler is corrupt or oppressive.

The Prophet has clearly laid down the principle regarding internal politics of a country that once a government is established, it is wrong to engage in the politics of opposition. Instead, one must engage in the politics of construction in other fields while avoiding political confrontation. The Prophet affirms another principle for relations with other countries. He declared aggressive war against other countries or states unlawful. No Muslim has the right to attack another country and invade it. However if another country attacks a Muslim country, the Muslim government can fight in self-defence. Islam permits only defensive war. Even in defensive war it should be understood that one should not rush to fight as soon as one hears news of war. A Muslim state should first resort to peaceful negotiation and try to understand the motives for the aggression. These methods aim to avoid or to minimize war. Should all such efforts fail and the other country attacks, then only a limited defensive war is permissible, and nothing more than that. A limited armed action is allowed only to put an end to aggression. This again has conditions. A Muslim force can only fight with the members of the attacking army or combatants, and not non-combatants.

To understand the implications of this today, you must keep in mind today's context, which is very different from 7th century Arabia. We live in the age of weapons of mass destruction. In this age, no war can be fought in which non-combatants are not killed. This, therefore, means that according to Islam, today war is not possible at all.

So, at the internal level, the Prophet has declared political revolt unlawful and stressed that Muslims should focus only on constructive

activities. On the external front, he allowed only for a defensive war in the face of clear aggression. He specified that even in this case, it is not permissible to kill non-combatants. Since in today's age of weapons of mass destruction it is not possible that non-combatants will not be killed during a war, there is only one option for Muslims now—and that is peaceful settlement of disputes. The option of war has ended.

This is Islamic pacifism. It is unfortunate that Muslims have forgotten this and have been unable to deliver the message of Islamic pacifism to the world. Muslims are as unaware of this ideology of peace as others are. The reason for this is that throughout history—and equally today—there is a very big evil called 'selective reporting'. At home, a mother-in-law does selective reporting of her daughter-in-law to her son, and a daughter-in-law does selective reporting of her mother-in-law to her husband. Neither of them will provide the full story. This is a mentality that has been carried down over the centuries.

The historical treatises written by Muslims are all characterised by selective reporting. They talk a great deal about battles and wars, but almost nothing about other issues. The Prophet engaged in *dawah* work, inviting people to God, and so did his companions. Following this, vast numbers of people embraced Islam, but details of the spread of Islam are not recorded in history books written by Muslims. The first book specifically on this subject was written in the 19th century by a British scholar, Professor T.W. Arnold—titled, *The Preaching of Islam*.

How strange it is that all books on Muslim history by Muslim authors suffered from this sort of selective reporting! They mention little or nothing of the peaceful activities that resulted in the great spread of Islam, but focus almost wholly on wars and political victories. Even the titles of their historic writings reflect this—*Futuh al-Sham* (Conquests of Syria), *Kitab Futuh al-Buldan* (The Book of the Conquests of the Lands), and many such books. 'Islamic history' was mostly about wars and conquests. To them, the later period of Muslim history was a chronicle of the military conquests of lands, although had the Prophet, his companions and other early Muslims not engaged in tremendous and peaceful work, there would not be more than a billion Muslims in the world today.

More than one billion Muslims! How did that happen? Can anyone embrace and willingly follow a religion at the point of a sword? No! Today, there are almost 60 countries with a Muslim majority. It

happened due to peaceful work. But in the books of history written by Muslims, there is little or no mention of this. Developments that came about through peaceful efforts have not found a place in these books, whereas only events like wars and political victories are related. This is selective reporting.

This trend continues even today and we are victims of such selective reporting. An interview with a Muslim news journalist is an example of this attitude. His questions were all about Muslims being allegedly oppressed across the world. In response to the questions, his attention was drawn to the fact that his source of information about such oppression was the media and he was quoting what he had read or heard in the media.

There is only one option for Muslims now—and that is peaceful settlement of disputes. The option of war has ended.

The media is an industry of selective reporting. It highlights sensational reports, and ignores other news. The Muslim media claims that Muslims are being oppressed and besieged by others etc., but this is totally baseless. There are ninety nine good things happening with Muslims, but the media ignores these to focus on the one negative news. And that one piece of information is highlighted in such a way that people assume, it reflects the totality of the Muslims' reality. This is the damage caused by selective reporting.

In 1992, the Babri mosque was destroyed. The whole world knows about it. People keep talking about it. But do people know that there are still some 5,50,000 mosques intact in India, where prayers are offered and where the *azan*, the call to prayer, is given, five times every day? No one wants to talk about this! There's no media reporting about these 5,50,000 mosques, but there is a great furore in the media about just one mosque.

In another example of selective reporting, a newspaper carried reports of communal riots in a city in northern India. Upon visiting the city it was observed that people were, going about their business as usual. Where utter chaos was expected in the entire city, there was nothing of the sort. Upon enquiry about the location of the riots, it was found out that it had happened in a small locality but the newspapers gave out the news under a sensational heading "Riots rock the city".

There has been enormous selective reporting in the writing of Muslim history, and today, in the age of the media, selective reporting continues unabated. All of this keeps people away from peace. It drives them into hate, anger, and enmity. We need to work to bring about a new history, a new age. We need to reprocess history. That will make people understand how meaningful and relevant the ideology of peace is and how peace can be established. □



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HOW TO OVERCOME ANXIETY

Mental Solution To A Mental Problem

ANXIETY is a form of distress, sometimes about sad memories or past losses, and at other times about uncertainties regarding the future. It is a common phenomenon, and a majority of men and women live in various states of anxiety.

Anxiety is a killer habit, self-destructive. It is not caused by any external agent; it is you, yourself who have developed this killer habit.

Problems arising from external sources may be beyond your control and hence difficult to get rid of. Whatever be the case, anxiety is a self-created problem. When it is self-created problem, it means that the solution lies in your hands, rather than in the hands of others. So, why complain? Anxiety is not a physical problem, it is a way of thinking. If you are an intellectually aware person and are able to change your thinking pattern, then anxiety will not bother you at all.

Anxiety is not a physical problem, it is a way of thinking. If you are an intellectually aware person and are able to change your thinking pattern, then anxiety will not bother you at all.

For example, if you are sad about a loss you incurred in the past, you can logically address your mind by saying that what you lost is not returnable and you gain nothing by thinking about it. And, if the future is worrisome, then address your mind by saying, 'Why do I bother about that which has not yet come? It may never happen at all!' Anxiety is not a real problem. It is a phenomenon of a particular way of thinking. Change your mind and adopt a positive pattern of thinking, and there will be no anxiety!

Problems are of three kinds. If it is related to the present, you can solve it through wise planning and result oriented action. If it is related to the past, then the simple solution is: forget it, and the problem will instantly disappear. If the problem concerns the future, then it is not a problem at all, just a baseless fear. In other words, it has no existence at all. If something is non-existent, how can it create a problem for you?

Discover the genesis of anxiety and you will readily be able to get rid of it. Anxiety is not a physical problem. It begins in the mind and can be buried only in the mind. □

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



REALIZATION OF GOD

The fourth Caliph of Islam, Ali ibn Abi Talib, observed:

'I realized God by having failed in my planning.'
(*Quwwat ul-Quloob*)

FAILING to accomplish one's plan is a common experience. Often, one fails to accomplish the plan one had set out for oneself. It serves as a reminder that there is a factor greater than his own self and this power is, no doubt, none other than God Almighty Himself.

This may be called a negative reminder. There are also positive reminders of the greatness of God and the number of positive reminders is far greater than negative ones. The rising of the new sun after every dark night is a positive reminder of God Almighty. The realization of God, the Creator of the sun is no doubt, of unbounded magnitude.

One's discovery of God will be an unending journey of divine glimpses. He will realize the greatness of God, on seeing the rains reviving the parched land; when the crops grow again; when the trees continue to supply oxygen; when the physical organs perform their functions every

new day just as they did before. All such happenings serve as positive reminders of the fact that there is an all-powerful God who continually showers His blessings upon us.

Nature abounds in such positive testimonies of God. Serious contemplation will make you realize the beneficent and bounteous Creator and His marvellous creation. Reflections of this kind will fill you with positivity. This is the best option for leading a tension-free life.

God-realization is a never-ending journey where one discovers the countless wonders of God.

Ma'rifat or God-realization is not something inanimate like a rock, but an ever-growing thing like a tree. A small seed grows and gradually becomes a tall green tree. The same is true of God realization. God-realization begins with the acknowledgement of faith. After this, through study and contemplation, faith develops into a burgeoning green tree of *Ma'rifat*.

God-realization is a never-ending journey where one discovers the countless wonders of God. Death is not the end of this journey. After death, the journey of *Ma'rifat* or God-realization for the believers will continue to a much greater degree.

The most enjoyable experience for the people of Paradise would be to live in the Gardens and breathe in the atmosphere of *Ma'rifat*. This will no doubt be the most enjoyable gift of Paradise. □



Sow and Reap

Super-achievement is not achieved through inheritance, but is a self-acquired phenomenon.

WHAT IS PATIENCE?

Principled Response

THE literal meaning of *sabr*, the Arabic word for patience, is 'to stop'. A life of faith is a principled one. A believer lives for a certain purpose. He does not take any step as an emotionally-driven reaction. When faced with any situation, he stops to think about the response he should make. It has to be in accordance with his principles and purpose in life, distinguishing this clearly from those that go against. In this way, he exercises *sabr* or patience.

In other words, impatience is reflected in a hasty response to a situation, while a considered, well-thought-out response is what patience is about. Patience is connected with all aspects of our lives. Should you feel overwhelmed by a desire, you must choose not to set about fulfilling the desire as soon as it emerges. You need to control the desire, think about it and then do what Divine law demands of you in that situation. For instance when someone has caused you trouble, you feel overwhelmed by the desire for revenge. But stop yourself and then do what your faith wants you to do. This is exercising patience.

Impatience is reflected in a hasty response to a situation, while a considered, well-thought-out response is what patience is about.

Suppose you are engaged in inviting people to God, and you face hurdles. You choose not to go about creating a furor or trying to fight the situation. Instead, you reflect on the

matter in the light of Divine law, in the light of the guidance of the Quran and the Prophet's practice, and then take steps for the situation in accordance with these sources. You make yourself do what the Quran and the Prophet's practice want you to do, not what you might personally like. This is exercising patience.

Patience is binding on a believer, and is a major principle of one's life. If a person lacks patience, it is open to doubt whether he has had a realization of faith. □



JEWISH-MUSLIM RELATIONSHIP

Building Bridges

THIS question often comes up: 'How to establish Jewish-Muslim relationship?' We have a model in this regard from the life of the Prophet of Islam.



The Prophet of Islam migrated from Makkah to Madinah in 622 CE and spent the rest of his life there. At that time some Jewish tribes were living in Madinah. When we study that period of the Prophet's life, we find examples that give us an authentic and practical model to build a good relationship between Jews and Muslims. (*Seerath ibn Ishaq*)

It is recorded that the Prophet once organised a dialogue in Madinah in which Muslim, Christian and Jewish representatives participated. Here is a prophetic example showing the importance of dialogue and negotiations between communities and settling all problems through peaceful negotiations.

There are several traditions of the Prophet often visiting Jewish leaders and scholars. He accepted invitations of Jewish leaders to visit their homes and discuss mutual issues. These traditions highlight the importance of interaction between the two communities. (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*)

God grants to non-violence what He does not grant to violence.

There is a very interesting story narrated by Al-Bukhari according to which, the Prophet of Islam on noticing a funeral procession passing by stood up in respect. One of his companions said, "O! Prophet it was funeral of a Jew, not a Muslim." The Prophet replied, "Was he not a human being?"

According to this tradition, the Prophet of Islam saw a commonality between himself and that Jew. It was that both were human beings, created by the one and the same God. These traditions about the Prophet of Islam give us a model for Muslim-Jewish relations and guidance for settling the problems arising between the two communities.

There is a misunderstanding in this regard that must be removed. Some verses in the Quran tell us that Jews are enemies of Muslims. But these verses are neither general nor absolute. These Quranic verses are related only to some contemporary Jews of the Prophet's time and have nothing to do with the Jewish community as such.

Muslims must follow the Quranic guidance of peaceful conciliation rather than violent confrontation.

Looking at the Palestinian problem, there is a clear direction in the Quran which says, "*As-sulh khair*" (4: 128). This means that reconciliation is the best solution. This is the wisdom for managing differences. Muslims must follow this Quranic guidance of peaceful conciliation rather than violent confrontation.

Another relevant teaching of the Prophet of Islam is recorded in Sahih Muslim. It says that God grants to non-violence what He does not grant to violence. This makes it clear that the peaceful method is far more effective than the violent one.

In the light of this, we can safely say that the so called Jewish-Muslim enmity is not advisable; rather it is an artificial state of affairs. By following the true teachings of the Prophet of Islam, we can establish peace between the two communities as well as in the Land of Israel and Palestine. □



Compete and Grow

Competition creates challenge, challenge results in motivation, and motivation leads to reaching new heights of success. In this sense, a better saying than 'compete or perish' is, 'compete and grow'.

HUMAN RIGHTS VERSUS HUMAN DUTIES

Seek Your Rights Through Duty

THE United Nations Organization (UNO) is the largest official body covering the greater part of all people on the face of this planet. Comprising of 192 member countries, it formally represents almost all of the nations on the globe. Its present headquarters are situated in Manhattan, New York, USA. Mr. Trygve Lie served as the first Secretary General of the UN and, at present, this position is held by Mr. Ban Ki-Moon.

On December 10, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly passed a historic resolution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This Declaration proved to be the trendsetter for generations to come. Since then, most movements with human rights as their target were launched on a similar pattern. There were protests all over of human rights being violated.

But there is a question: Why do these human rights activists fail to achieve their declared goal of establishing ideal justice in all societies? History shows that these activists have made very little headway in their struggles. Their activism is reduced to being protesters rather than achievers.

What is the reason for this failure? The reason is that this Declaration is not in consonance with the law of nature, according to which, everyone enjoys freedom. This very freedom stands as a permanent hurdle in the path of establishing ideal justice in society. Instead of making history, those standing up for human rights have done little other than compose litanies of complaints and protests. This is because they do not plan how to achieve their goal.

It is but natural that human rights can never exist in an ideal manner in any society. The concept of social equality is found only in the

If society were characterized by uniformity and equality on a permanent basis, the atmosphere of challenge would disappear. If there were no challenges, the process of intellectual development would cease.

dictionary and is not borne out in practical life. It is all very well to say that we want to establish human rights in every society, but this is an unachievable goal. A philosopher has rightly said that nature abhors uniformity. This state of affairs is not a social evil; on the contrary, it is a blessing in disguise. It opens up challenges and creates competition in society. If society were characterized by uniformity and equality on a permanent basis, the atmosphere of challenge would disappear. If there were no challenges, the process of intellectual development would cease.

Rights are the result of the fulfilment of duties; they are not the product of protests and demands.

The right approach is to lay emphasis on human duties instead of human rights. It should be stressed that when people carry out their duties, they will automatically receive their rights. Whenever human rights activists see that they are not getting the desired results, they intensify their efforts. Rather than doing this, they should shift the focus of their efforts from the rights-based approach to the duty-based approach. Rights are the result of the fulfilment of duties; they are not the product of protests and demands. □



Don't seek concessions

In this competitive world, those who want concessions will always find themselves in the back-seat. It is only those who make every effort to earn excellent qualifications who will ever come to the fore.

INDIA RISES AGAIN

Building A New India

OVER the past several centuries, India has played an epoch-making role, and now, in the twenty-first century, history is repeating itself with India reviving its role once again. Nature itself, by locating the world's highest mountain in India, has symbolically indicated that this land is destined to play a supreme role in human history. Now, it has become abundantly clear that India has proved competent to play such a role.

A historical example which highlights this fact is that of Indian numerals. Brahmagupta (598-670 CE), who was born in Multan, formerly a part of India, was the first person to develop a numerical method using the power of zero, which he presented in his Sanskrit treatise, *Brahmasphutasiddhanta* (The Extensive Treatise of Brahma). This treatise was translated into Arabic between 796 and 806 CE. Thus, the Indian numeric system first entered Baghdad, then spread to Spain, Italy, France, England and Germany.

No emotional speech can serve as a substitute for wise guidance. No mere talk of activism can be an alternative to realistic planning.

A Western scholar Wilfrid Blunt writes: "Nothing so delayed the advance of science in the West as the clumsiness of the Roman numerals. Had the Indian numerals, which had reached Baghdad from India towards the end of the eighth century, been soon afterwards introduced into and adopted by Western Europe as a whole, much of the scientific progress which we associate with the Renaissance in Italy might have been achieved several centuries earlier." As early as the seventh century an Indian mind was able to make a contribution to history that paved the way for the further advancement of science.

European colonialism—begun in the sixteenth century—culminated in the twentieth century in an empire, with India as its jewel. After the British colonialists had ruled India for about two hundred years, the Indian freedom struggle passed through various stages until 1920. Then its leadership was assumed by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who declared that India's struggle would be purely non-violent. Many doubted the feasibility of gaining freedom through peaceful or non-violent methods. Mahatma Gandhi who had studied modern advancements in human civilization, developed his own philosophy

and used unconventional methods. He made full use of modern means—the printing press, modern communications and techniques of organization, and most importantly the concept of self-determination. These developments made it possible to organize an effective movement on a national scale without using arms. India proved to be a land of fertile soil for this kind of leadership and Mahatma Gandhi showed that it was entirely possible to achieve a great goal like national freedom without taking recourse to violence. In 1947, the world witnessed how India—without bloodshed—successfully won its independence.

India's freedom in 1947 remains one of the most remarkable phenomena of modern history. It successfully showed that it was possible to achieve any goal through peaceful activism, which meant eschewing the use of guns or bombs. This achievement taught a lesson to the entire world. In 1947, India not only won its freedom but also provided a lead to all nations that any goal could be attained without using arms.

Another significant contribution made by India is the example of a person from humble backgrounds winning the general elections and becoming India's Prime Minister. Narendra Modi was appointed as the 15th Prime Minister of India in May 2014. On September 27, 2014, he represented India on the global stage of the United Nations, from which he addressed the world. This was not just a personal achievement, but showed that the modern age has opened up opportunities so great in their scope that every kind of success can be attained, regardless of one's background.

***It is human nature
that deterrent
punishment is
essential for the
maintenance of law
and order.***

The present age is considered to be an age of freedom, democracy, secularism and industrialization. In a single word, all these developments can be termed de-monopolization. In previous centuries, only the privileged few had a monopoly over opportunities; the common man had no share whatsoever in them. The modern age has broken the hold over these opportunities and has opened them up for everyone.

Through its current Prime Minister, India has demonstrated the fact that we are living in a new age. Now, everything is for everyone. The only condition is that of competency. Although there will always be challenges and competition, if a person proves capable of meeting challenges, no obstacle can hinder his progress.

Building A New India

After independence in 1947, our leaders began to build a new India. Sixty eight years on, India has yet to attain the desired status of a world-class nation, while other nations such as the USA, China and Singapore have forged ahead. Now the time has come to reassess the whole matter.

Here is one example which gives us a pointer on how the planning of our national policies could be made effective. On the eve of India's independence, Mahatma Gandhi gave a call to the nation to bring about a 'Clean India', but to no avail. On the eve of its independence (1965), Singapore's founding father, Lee Kuan Yew, also gave a call for a 'Clean Singapore', and his call was successful.

Why was there this difference? Mahatma Gandhi's call was an appeal without compulsion, while Lee Kuan Yew's call involved compulsion. His call was effective because Singapore adopted deterrent punishment, while in India there is no punishment, only appeals for right conduct. In October 2014, the Prime Minister of India launched a new 'Clean India Mission' known as the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, but once again without deterrent punishment, there has not been much progress.

It is human nature that deterrent punishment is essential for the maintenance of law and order. Appeals will not get any positive results unless there is an element of compulsion. Developed nations have adopted some form of compulsive system.

The weakness of the Indian system is that no one fears punishment.

At present, there are three working models, and if India wants its scheme to work, it must choose from any of these three. The American model is based on competition; their credo being, 'compete or perish' making it imperative for citizens to be law-abiding. The Chinese model adopted by Premier Deng Xiaoping is based on two principles: controlled politics and a decontrolled economy. This model has, again, created compulsion due to which it is working successfully. The Singaporean model is based on strict imposition of laws which includes caning. This system has created a compulsion making people cautious about following it, otherwise they may face severe punishment.

The weakness of the Indian system is that no one fears punishment. Every day, news of crimes is reported, but we seldom read about their punishment. The element of compulsion has been removed, weakening the Indian system.

India has the greatest number of laws, but these laws are not implemented. This has caused the element of fear to be disassociated from the laws. In the 200 years of British rule over India, very few laws were made as compared to the laws made in free India. Law and order was much better in British India because people knew that they would surely face punishment if found guilty. Today there is no such fear of punishment. Where there is no fear, there is no law-abidingness. And there is no other factor that can serve the same purpose as fear.

No emotional speech can serve as a substitute for wise guidance. No mere talk of activism can be an alternative to realistic planning. Fictitious stories cannot produce factual results. We have to adopt a system in which the violation of law should involve deterrent punishment. Without this there can be no hope of building a new India. □

An advertisement for 'Spirit of Islam' online access. On the left, a laptop displays the text 'THE GREATER IPAD' at the top of a document. To the right, the text reads: 'NOW ACCESS SPIRIT OF ISLAM ONLINE'. Below this, a hand cursor icon points to the text 'Download ebook at: www.newshunt.com'. At the bottom right, the website 'www.spiritofislam.co.in' is listed.

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TURN YOUR WEAKNESS INTO YOUR STRENGTH

Discover God

IN Chapter 4 of the Quran an aspect of human life has been mentioned in these words: "*Khuliq al-insana zaifa.*" (4: 28) That is, 'Man has been created weak.'

This verse depicts one side of human life. The other is that although man is weak in this world, all his needs have been made available, with little effort of his own. This reality is referred to in the Quran as: 'He has given you all that you asked of Him.' (14: 34)

Man needs light to see things, and there is a sun shining in the sky to give out light. Man needs air to hear sounds, and an envelope of air surrounds him everywhere, all the time. Man needs oxygen to breathe, and this precious element for survival is constantly supplied to him everywhere. Man needs water to drink, and the earth has great quantities of water to quench his thirst. Man needs food for growth and nourishment, and the soil on earth provides him with this food.

There are billions of such components on earth which compensate for man's weakness, so that man can lead his life smoothly without facing any real problem. This arrangement is so complete that it is said that the universe is custom-made for man.

Why is this so? This is for man to discover his merciful Creator so that every moment he can offer the response of thankfulness to Him, lead a life characterized by positive thinking and live among people as a complaint-free person. The peace of mind of such a person does not get disturbed at any moment.

Weakness makes a man cut-to-size. Realization of this weakness develops modesty in a person, giving rise to a realistic approach. Most importantly, it reminds a person that he is a creation and not the Creator. Such weakness is thus a positive thing. Weakness makes one realize: 'I cannot do anything alone. I can perform a task only with

Weakness saves a person from negative thinking, such as pride, superiority complex, selfishness, and an unrealistic approach.

the help of others.' This sense inculcates the greatest spiritual value in a person. It builds tolerance towards others, respect for each other and the spirit of conciliation. It fosters a universal outlook; a spirit of collective thinking instead of individualism.

In this way, weakness, in terms of its results, becomes one's strength. Moreover, weakness saves a person from negative thinking, such as pride, superiority complex, selfishness, and an unrealistic approach.

Man has been given a strong mind, along with physical weakness. This equation is a blessing. His weakness becomes a motivating force for intellectual development.

Man has been given freedom of choice which if left unchecked, can turn into anarchy. The sense of weakness serves as a brake preventing a person from this kind of derailment. With no weakness, man will become proud and egoistic. He will become a problem-member for his society. The sense of weakness does the work of a speed-breaker for man and helps in developing the spirit of self-control.

Man has been given a strong mind, along with physical weakness. This equation is a blessing. His weakness becomes a motivating force for intellectual development. If he understands and avails of this law of nature, then his weak personality will certainly emerge strong. And, a strong personality is another name for a successful person. □



Waste of time

In this world, time is extremely limited. We cannot afford to spend this precious commodity on revenge or retaliation or other such negative pursuits. The price we have to pay for such futile engagement is in terms of our own progress and development coming to a halt.

WHICH RELIGION?

Proven Authenticity

DR. S. Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) the second President of India was a well-known writer and philosopher. In one of his works, titled Religion and Culture, he showed that religion is absolutely necessary for human beings, and that without it, man cannot stay alive. In this regard, he stated, 'There is no question of religion or no religion but what kind of religion.'

Dr. Radhakrishnan advocated a form of religion based on the notion of oneness of different religions—the belief that there is a universal Reality that is found in all religions, although with some external differences.

This understanding emerges from attributing to the whole something that actually applies to the part. It is true that there can be partial or minor differences between two different truths and despite this, they can be considered one and the same. But when the difference is of a major magnitude, to claim that they are the same is not tenable. For instance, if one religion says that God is One, while another religion denies the existence of God itself, then both these truth-claims cannot be said to be the same. Both cannot be said to be true at the same time.

Religion is absolutely necessary for human beings, and that without it, man cannot stay alive.

Some religions claim that personal experience is, or should be, the basis of religion. Such forms of religion are unacceptable because the real issue is one of authenticity of a religion. A religion that is devised on the basis of personal experience cannot claim to be authentic.

The question then arises: Which religion is it that should be accepted? From the intellectual point of view, the answer to this question is that it should be a religion whose authenticity is proven through historical standards. Its prophet must be a historical prophet. Its scripture must be intact in its original form. It must be fully reliable according to the test of history. □



LACK OF PERSONALITIES OR LACK OF AWARENESS?

Understand The Times

IT is common for communities to consider some of their key figures from the past to have been larger than life. They project an exaggerated image and at times go to the extent of according them a legendary status.

This is something that present-day Muslims also do—and on a massive scale. Muslims today project some of their past figures in a grossly exaggerated manner. This has caused them two major deficiencies—overestimating their past, and underestimating their present.

Muslims today project some of their past figures in a grossly exaggerated manner. This has caused them two major deficiencies, over estimating their past, and underestimating their present.

Muslim writers and preachers often highlight figures from the past and insist that the only one way for Muslims to change their fortunes is for such figures to be born again. By presenting a larger than life image of these personalities, Muslims think that if only such people were present today, their conditions would be drastically different. This is nothing but wishful thinking.

Arab historian Khairuddin al-Zirikli (d. 1976) prepared a multi-volume compendium of famous Muslim personalities of the past, titled *al-A'lām*. He imagined that Muslims could experience a new revival if such figures could again be born. In a couplet, he expresses this sentiment:

*Bring Salahuddin Ayyubi back in our midst! Let there be a revival
of the Battle of Hattin or battles of similar vigour!*

This couplet only shows the poet's complete lack of awareness of the times. Today's age and conditions are drastically different. To do anything, the first condition is to have a deep understanding of the times, and surely not to have Salahuddin Ayyubi (Saladin) being born again. The fact is that in today's age, people like Salahuddin Ayyubi

have indeed been born, but they could not do much in practical terms, because they were bereft of the required insight and awareness of the times. One example of this was the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat (d. 2004). In terms of his natural capacities, you could call him a second Salahuddin Ayyubi, but despite all the sacrifices he made, he was completely unsuccessful.

History can be divided into two major periods—the ancient traditional age, and the modern scientific age. There is a fundamental difference that distinguishes every aspect between these two. This distinction is so immense that if a noted personality of ancient times were to be born today, he might not be able to achieve anything spectacular. In fact, he might find himself a total misfit.

If you want to do anything meaningful in today's times, a basic condition is deep understanding of the times. Without this you can do nothing meaningful.

If you want to do anything meaningful in today's times, a basic condition is deep understanding of the times. Without this you can do nothing meaningful—be it in the field of education, scholarship, institution-building, governance, leadership, social reform, intellectual exchange or whatever. To provide guidance in any aspect of life today, you need a thorough understanding of modern life. Lacking this understanding, if somehow you manage to gain a leadership post, your case would be best depicted in these lines of a poet:

*When a crow becomes the leader of a community,
he guides them to the path of ruination. □*



Wise Adjustment

Always remember that it is not your intention or your desire that determines the course taken by the external world. It is a wise adjustment between your desires and external realities that leads to great success.

BETWEEN PRIDE AND MODESTY

Gratitude—To God And Man

A successful lawyer decided to buy property in an expensive locality. One of his friends asked him why he wanted to own property in that very expensive colony. He answered:

“Because I do not want my Mercedes to be parked next to a Santro.”

Why did the lawyer make such a statement? He considered his car merely a shopping item. He had the money to buy a Mercedes and so he purchased it by paying the required amount. But, this is greatly underestimating the matter. In truth, the car is a great divine gift rather than being a mere status symbol.

God created man, and then He provided him with natural means of transport such as horses, camels, mules and other animals. This was the first phase of transportation. Being the Creator and Sustainer, God endowed nature with the potential for advanced mechanical means of transportation to meet the future needs of man. God bestowed man with intelligence so that he could utilize the natural laws to his advantage by which he made many discoveries. He discovered the wheel and developed vehicles such as the bicycle and the motorcar. Thus, in terms of potential, modern vehicles are God-given. And since many people of various countries were involved in turning this natural potential into reality, they are also a gift from humanity.

Acknowledging others' contributions develops modesty and positive thinking which is the source of all social good. Not doing so, would lead to arrogance and pride, which are the root cause of all social evils.

Reflecting over this entire history, we first need to acknowledge the Creator. This is known as *shukr*, or gratitude, in religious terms. And acknowledging humanity's immense hard work that went into developing these vehicles,

we will have to thank the entire humanity through whose efforts cars were manufactured for common benefit of man. When we think this way, we will acknowledge God the most, and then acknowledge humanity. We will realize that the money used to purchase the car is of indeed negligible value.

The lawyer's statement is indicative of the general mind-set. Every man and woman is engaged in the same kind of thinking and only differ in terms of degree.

However, this is not a trivial matter. This kind of psychology develops pride and arrogance. In contrast, he who considers the thing he has purchased from the market as a divine gift as well as a gift from humanity, and that his own contribution to it is nothing, will certainly develop modesty. There is nothing greater than modesty for any person.

Acknowledging others' contributions develops modesty and positive thinking which is the source of all social good. Not doing so, would lead to arrogance and pride, which are the root cause of all social evils. □



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DEALING WITH DIFFERENCES

Principles Of Social Living

THE Quran relates: "Believers, if an evil-doer brings you any news, ascertain the correctness of the report fully, lest you unwittingly harm others, and then regret what you have done". (49: 6)

This Quranic verse indicates an important principle for social life. And it is that if someone says something which is controversial, you must not suspect this person of having ill intentions and think of him as bad. Instead, the right approach is to consider the matter as needing proper investigation. Form an opinion about someone only after having clear evidence or proof, not before it.

Complaints and controversies are most often caused by ignorance and misunderstandings. Lack of proper information often drives people to form a hostile opinion about another person. This is not the way to form an opinion about someone. Islamic teachings advise us to

investigate the matter thoroughly to arrive at clear and convincing evidence, and based on that alone form an opinion.

***Form an opinion
about someone only
after having clear
evidence or proof,
not before it.***

In our social dealings, people complain about each other. These complaints get magnified, and soon turn into hatred. Hatred, in turn, escalates into uglier forms of evil, including enmity. In almost every such case, the fundamental cause is people forming

opinions about each other without proper investigation and relying on rumours and hearsay, which they take to be confirmed facts. The results of this are always serious: regret in this world, and punishment in the Hereafter. □



Forget the Unpleasantness

If one wants to complain, one is sure to find plenty to complain about in life. The intelligent thing to do is to forget the unpleasant things and carry on to fulfil one's true purpose in life.

EXPERIENCE OF DEATH

The Ultimate Leveller

Remember death often, because it demolishes all desires.

THESE profound words of the Prophet remind us that death is a tremendous experience that we will all have to undergo one day or the other. We spend our lives on earth doing the things we want to, pursuing our dreams, trying to build our own little or big worlds. But very soon, death arrives and puts an end to everything. Death is a nullification of the worlds we have been trying to construct.

Realistically, remembering death is enough for us to reform ourselves. It should suffice to cure us of the obsession with worldly things and 'world-worshipping' mentality, and make us ever-conscious of the Hereafter. The root of all evil lies in being totally oblivious of death. Conversely, the source of all goodness is living with the constant awareness that one day we will die and appear before the Lord of the worlds to give an account of our life.

Turning a blind eye to death makes one frivolous, while consciousness of death makes one to take life earnestly. Awareness of death makes a person conscious of the need to obey God. It reminds him that he is simply a helpless creature. It cuts him down to his actual size. It helps in abstaining from evil and making a person modest. All this helps in one's reformation.

Remembering death brings a realisation that we need to be responsible for the way we lead our life. □



It's All In Your Hands

If you have successfully created your negative thought, why do you fail to delete it from your mind? The second is as easy as the first.

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**

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Alif Lam Mim

Do people think that once they say, 'We believe,' they will be left alone and not be put to the test? We certainly tried those who have gone before them, so God will certainly distinguish between those who are truthful and those who are lying. (29: 1-3)

The question of whether a man is a true believer is decided on the basis of how he conducts himself under extraordinary rather than ordinary circumstances. It becomes clear, on such occasions through a man's overt actions whether he is in actual fact what he claims to be. Those who prove to be steadfast in their belief and convictions under extraordinary circumstances, will be treated by God as believers in the true sense.

To pass the divine test means to become a man of faith by adopting the way of sacrifice, that is to say, to accept and confirm the Truth when people in general reject it; to be staunch in one's beliefs when people harbour doubts; to be a believer even at the cost of curbing one's ego; to accept the Truth even when rejection of it does not entail any loss; to spend when restraint would appear to be more prudent; to be steadfast and firm when circumstances warrant fleeing; to surrender when the occasion demands that one save one's skin; to bow down in submission when there is an occasion for arrogance; to support and co-operate when it amounts to surrendering and sacrificing everything.

The inner man is revealed on such extraordinary occasions. Thereafter, no one is left with the opportunity to make fictitious claims about what in actual fact one is not.

Do those who do evil imagine that they will escape Us? How ill they judge! He who hopes to meet God should know that God's appointed hour is sure to come. He is the All Hearing, the All Knowing. And whoever strives, strives only for himself—God is independent of all His creation—as for those who have faith and do good works, We shall certainly cleanse them of their evil deeds and reward them according to the best of their actions. (29: 4-7)

To be a believer is often synonymous with going against the trend of the times. This amounts to being a God-worshipper in an atmosphere of hero-worship; to subscribe to principles in an atmosphere where importance is given to desires; to endeavour to live for the Hereafter in an atmosphere where people live for worldly interests.

This kind of life requires an earnest struggle, and only those who have absolute faith in God and who have made God's expected reward their sole focus, can remain steadfast on this thorny path.

We have enjoined man to show kindness to his parents. But if they bid you associate with Me something about which you have no knowledge, do not obey them. To Me you shall all return, and I shall tell you about all that you have done.

We shall surely admit those who believe and do good deeds to the company of the righteous. (29: 8-9)

Of all the creatures, a man's parents have the greatest right over him. But, just as everything has a limit, so also do the parent's rights have a limit, in the sense that—according to the Prophet's tradition—'no obedience may be shown to any creature if it means disobedience to the Creator.'

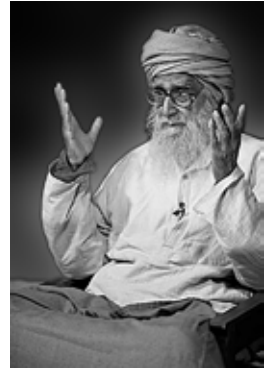
The rights of parents must be observed, but only so long as they do not clash with the rights of God. □



ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

***An Interaction with Maulana Wahiduddin Khan
on Indian Muslims (May 31, 2014)***



Q: Several Muslim organisations are demanding reservations for Muslims in government jobs. They claim that this is necessary for Muslims to progress. Do you think that if Muslims are not granted such reservations they cannot progress?

A: Muslims can progress only if they do not get reservations. If they get reservations, they will never progress.

I say this because this world is a world of competition. We have to inculcate the competitive spirit among Muslims. If Muslims get reservations, they will become complacent and paralyzed forever. Through reservations, a few Muslims may get a few small jobs, but not the top jobs, because you can get to the top only through competing with others.

From the very outset, I have been against reservations for Muslims. I do not regard those who demand reservations for Muslims as well-wishers of Muslims.

Q: What do the Muslims of India expect from Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi?

A: Our country has a democratic system. One day somebody becomes the leader of the country, and the next day somebody else. This does not make any difference at all. The system remains the same. It is not affected by someone coming to power. The only thing that changes is the person who occupies the seat of power.

I would say that Muslims should think of the nation's interests, and not in terms of sectarian or communal interests, otherwise they can never progress. Because the nation's progress will benefit everyone, and not just one community. Muslims should actively participate in the general progress of the nation, and not demand separate development schemes.

Q: Do you think Muslims fear that Narendra Modi or the Hindutva forces will not do anything for their progress?

A: In our country, nothing will happen that goes against the country's Constitution. Mr. Narendra Modi's election campaign focused only on two issues—development and infrastructure. He did not talk about Hindutva. Hindutva is only something that is used to scare Muslims. Mr. Modi talked only of development and infrastructure, and these are for everyone.

I think that Muslims should not have any fear. But if Muslims demand reservations, it is definitely something to fear, because then they won't be able to enter the mainstream. Only through competition with others can you enter the mainstream.

Q: Do you think Narendra Modi might discriminate against Muslims?

A: See Gujarat, where Narendra Modi was Chief Minister; Muslims there are really prospering. There's a lot of wrong propaganda that Muslims in Gujarat are not prospering.

In India, we are fortunate to have democracy and freedom. No individual can change the democratic system. It has been in existence for over 60 years. And so, it will prevail. □



Intellectual Freedom

*People are free to use their freedom as they please.
If you disagree with someone's point of view, you
can express your view in a rational manner; you
must try to address the other person's mind.*

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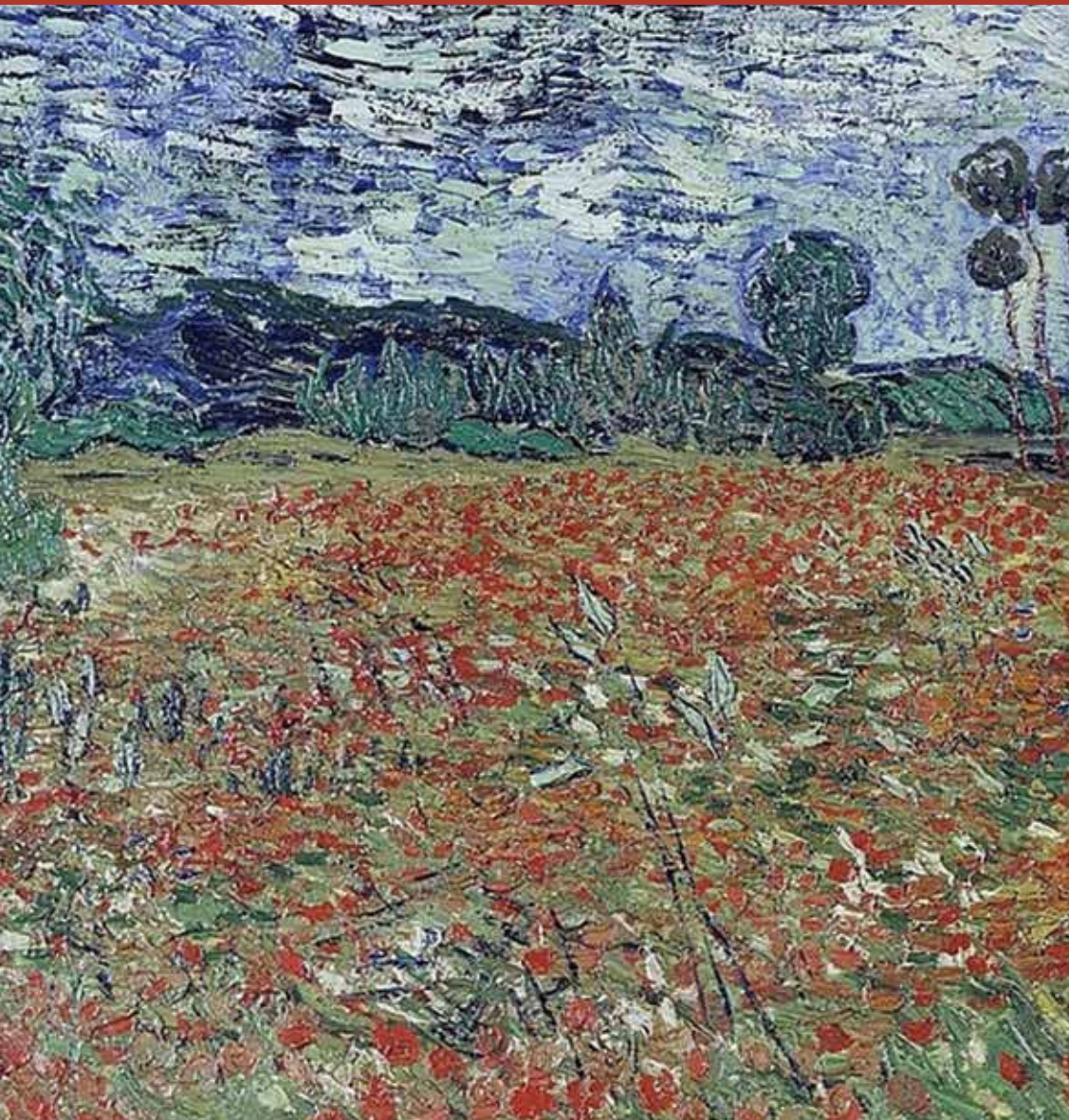


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