

The Lesson of the Cow

In the 1930s, I was a student of a village madrasa in UP. There I studied an Urdu Reader in which there was a poem composed by the well-known poet, Ismail Meerathi. It was titled 'Hamari Gaye' (Our Cow). One of the verses spoke of the cow as a special kind of animal. It eats grass and in return gives us milk. In other words, the cow is a 'divine industry', which is able to convert non-milk into milk.

This poem became a part of my memory. It taught me a great lesson. God, the Creator, has made the cow a model for human behaviour in that it gives us a lesson in high morality.

It is said that man is a social animal. But what is society? Society is full of differences. Every day we experience some provocative situation, every day we face some unwanted behaviour from others and suffer from anger and tension because of conflicts arising out of differences with others.

What should we do? The cow is the answer. God has created a model for us to follow in the form of the cow. We have to adopt 'cow culture', we have to develop in our personality

what may be called 'the capacity for conversion'; we have to turn negative experiences into positive thinking.

The fact is that everyone enjoys freedom. But everyone is free to misuse his freedom. It is this misuse of freedom that creates problems. As we cannot abolish people's freedom, we have no option but to learn the art of problem management.

According to Islam, the present world is a testing ground. Every man and woman here is being tested. If they have freedom, it is because, without freedom, there can be no test. This freedom is God-given, and as such, no one has the licence to abolish it. Thus we have no option but to follow the cow pattern, that is, to turn negativity into 'positivity'.

Once a man came to the Prophet of Islam, and said: 'O Prophet, give me a piece of "master advice" by which I may be able to manage all the affairs of my life.'

The Prophet replied: 'Don't be angry.'

'Don't be angry,' means learning the art of anger management, learning the art of converting anger into forgiveness, learning the art of converting anger into peacefulness.

Leaving society and going into the jungle or the mountains is a lower form of spirituality. The higher form of spirituality is that which is demonstrated by the cow — we live with people, experience all kinds of unwanted behaviour from others, but try not to react negatively. We have to imitate the cow. Just as the cow converts grass into milk, we have to convert negative thought into positive thought. This is the highest form of spirituality.

Most men and women are battling stress. They ask, what is the way to de-stress themselves. I would suggest that they learn a lesson from the cow. They should adopt the 'cow habit' in their affairs and they will be able to de-stress themselves quite successfully. The cow symbolises an elevated form of

lifestyle. Adopt this lifestyle, and you will be able to enjoy a tension-free life.

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