

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's Address at the 2nd Annual Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies

On 30 April, 2015, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan was awarded the Sayyidina Imam Al Hassan Ibn Ali Peace Award at the Second Annual Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, held at Abu Dhabi. Shaykh Abdullah Bin Bayyah, Chairman of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, presented the award to the Maulana at the closing session of the three-day conference. The peace award was given in acknowledgement of the Maulana's decades'-long efforts for promoting world peace. On the occasion, Shaykh Bin Bayyah said that 90-year old Maulana Wahiduddin Khan had worked tirelessly for over seventy years for the cause of establishing peace in order that a culture of goodwill and tolerance may prevail all over the world.



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan fourth from left

mind had probably been shaped by media reports of Muslims engaging in violence in different parts of the world, and so he might have been led to believe that there must be some intellectual basis for this in the Quran.

I replied to him, saying, "It is a fact that some Muslims are indeed engaged in violence. But this is not based on Islamic teachings. The Quran says: 'Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil

them a target to work for. And what is that target? It is dawah work, the work of inviting people to God. It is to communicate the word of God to others.

We, at the Centre for Peace and Spirituality, have prepared translations of the Quran in various languages, and there are many people in different countries who are engaged in distributing these, as well as other literature on Islam and peace. Our volunteers

have to help them change their minds, but that, at the same time, it is also necessary to give them a purpose, a task, a target.

There are numerous Quranic verses and hadith reports that tell us that the Quran was sent for the whole of humankind. For instance, the Prophet of Islam is reported to have said: "No house on earth – big or small – will remain but God's word shall enter into it." (Musnad Ahmad)

It means that in the Divine Plan, this book, this message of God, must reach all of humankind. This work needed some resources and technology, which were not available in the 7th century. Now, however, everything is available. Today, there is openness, there are modern methods of communication and publishing, and so on.

It is a fact that we have the preserved book of God, the Quran. We have the Sunnah. The Quran and the Sunnah are the only source of Truth, Truth with a capital 'T'. It is our belief that everyone is born as a seeker. Everyone wants to discover the Truth with a capital 'T', but only the Quran and the Sunnah are sources of this Truth. Thus, the Quran and Sunnah need to be conveyed to every person across the world.

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with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend.' (41:34) It means do good in return for bad deeds and you will see that your enemy has become your dearest friend."

Dawah Work: The Greatest Target

Here, I want to add an important point. If you want to make people peaceful, you will have to give

are engaged in doing dawah work in different parts of the world. We are giving a target for our youths. They go around distributing literature, interacting with people and engaging in dawah work in different ways. Prior to this, these people were living in negativity, in hate, but now they are living in love and compassion.

So, I would say that if we want to make people peaceful, we will

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If our youth have this target, it will create a great enthusiasm, a great sense of mission and purpose in them. When they are motivated by a target of this sort, they will abandon all hatred and violence.

Two-Point Formula

To reiterate, the problem of terrorism is an extremely serious one, and the way out is a two-point formula. First, we need to help people who are engaged in terrorism to realise that Islam is a religion of peace, a religion of compassion, a religion of blessing. This we can do through literature and other means. Then, we have to give them a target. Without a target, a theory or ideology will not work. And the best and biggest target is dawah work, conveying the message of the Quran to people across the world.

Political Interpretation of Islam

If we want to make the people who are engaged in terrorism to give up violence and become peaceful, if we want to change their minds, we will have to give them an alternative ideology. In the first half of the 20th century, Muslims were living in a sense of loss—of loss of political power. At this time, some thinkers emerged among them. They propagated a political interpretation of Islam. This appealed to the mindset of many Muslims who were living in this sense of loss caused by the loss of Muslim political power. And so, they accepted this interpretation of Islam very easily. Today, many

Muslims are obsessed with this interpretation. The real problem is this political interpretation of Islam.

The advocates of the political interpretation of Islam wanted to establish Islamic rule or Muslim rule all over the world. They found that the seats of political power were already occupied by some people, and so they set about trying to unseat them. This led to violence between these two groups.

From Living in a Sense of Loss to Living in a Sense of Gain

The political interpretation of Islam is the root of all this violence that Muslims are today engaged in the name of Islam, and the only reason why it became so widely acceptable was that Muslims were living in a sense of loss. Given this, it is imperative that we provide them with a sense of gain. We have to help them realise that Islam is a faith that leads one to Paradise, and so in every situation a Muslim can live in a sense of gain. The Prophet of Islam lived in every situation in a sense of gain, not in a sense of loss.

So, this is the solution of this problem of terrorism. We need to explain the right interpretation of Islam to people. Then, I believe, the problem of terrorism in the name of Islam will be solved. ■

Maulana's Keynote Address

Distinguished guests, Brother Shaykh Abdullah Bin Bayyah, and Islamic scholars,

We are here to discuss a very serious problem—of how to promote peace in Muslim societies. There is no doubt at all that this is a very important issue. At the same time, I would say that mere condemnation of this violence is not enough. The problem is an intellectual one. A section of Muslims are misguided into engaging in terrorism. And so, we need to remove their misconceptions. Only then will it be possible for peace to prevail.

The Right, Peaceful Interpretation of Islam

According to a well-known dictum, 'Violence begins in the mind'. So also is the case with peace. Peace, too, begins in the mind. Hence, we need a peaceful ideology, the right ideology. Only then can we hope that the Muslims who have wrongly taken to terrorism in the name of Islam will change their minds.

The sources of Islam—the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet—tell us that Islam is a religion of peace. The Prophet of Islam started his mission in 610 CE in Makkah. What was his method of preaching? He used to visit gatherings of people and say to

them: Ya ayyuhan-nas qulu la ilaha illallah tuflihu ("O people! Say, 'There is no god but God' and you be successful"). This is the ideology of Islam. It is based on tawhid, the oneness of God.

Hazrat Aisha says of the Prophet of Islam: "Whenever the Prophet had to choose between two options he would always opt for the easier one, [not the harder one]." (Bukhari)

Now, what is the easier option, and what is the harder one?

An easier option is the peaceful method, while a harder option is violence. The Prophet always opted for the peaceful method.

These two—tawhid or the oneness of God, and peace—are thus two basic principles of Islam. We need to make people aware of this.

It is an undeniable fact that due to wrong interpretations of Islam, some sections of our society are today engaged in hate and violence.

Once, during a visit to America, I was invited to speak at a church. After the talk, a Christian scholar asked me a question. He said, "In the Bible, there is a beautiful teaching, to 'love your enemies'. Can you cite any such teaching from the Quran as well?"

At the back of this gentleman's mind there was lurking this misunderstanding that Islam teaches hate for others. His