

'Nothing Negative About Guilt'

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN heads the Centre for Peace and Spirituality, Delhi. The Islamic scholar known for his liberal views answers questions sent by young readers



It is said that we should keep remembering death; would this not become an obstacle to growth and development?

Stuti Malhotra, New Delhi

■ No, remembering death means to remind ourselves that time is very short. We cannot afford to lose time. You cannot avoid death, so it is wise to plan your life on the basis of urgency. In fact, remembering death makes you more prompt, efficient, and cautious about your time and energy. You know then that it is 'now or never'.

How important is anti-self thinking?

Khawaja Kaleemuddin, Pennsylvania

■ Anti-self thinking means constantly reassessing your activities, constantly revising your own plan. It is said that 'to err is human'. This being so, it is a must for everyone to discover his errors and concede to having made wrong judgments. So, anti-self thinking is a self-correcting process. It means finding out where you went wrong, where and how you missed the bus.

Why is a luxurious

lifestyle condemned by religion?

Raazia Siddiqui, New Delhi

■ It is not a matter of condemnation. It is a matter of wise living. A luxurious lifestyle makes you an easygoing person. It leaves you unable to understand the realities of life.

Is it necessary to entertain feelings

of guilt? Doesn't it undermine confidence?

Sailesh Malhotra, Singapore

■ This thinking is based on a wrong

assumption. Guilt means admitting your mistakes, so guilt gives you renewed confidence that henceforward you will do your work in a better way. Feeling guilty means being more cautious and more sincere; so, guilt is an entirely positive quality. There is nothing negative about it.

What is the importance of silence?

Fatima Sarah, Bangalore

■ Silence is the quality of a wise person. Silence means more concentrated thinking. Silence means avoiding immediate reaction and giving a well-considered response. Silence means speaking after thinking.

What is the difference between spirit and mind?

Maria Khan, New Delhi

■ In my experience, there is no difference between the two. Spirit is not an independent identity. Spirit is only a manifestation of the mind. Mind is the basis of every personality. All other things like emotions, thinking and love are just different expressions of the mind. You are what your mind is.

To the young, freedom is the

summum bonum or greatest good. What is your opinion?

Navdeep Kapur, New Delhi

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



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When surrounded by problems, how can we remain positive?

Priyanshu Bakshi, Hyderabad

■ It is very easy. If you become negative when you face problems, you become unable to tackle those problems, while if you remain positive you will be able to tackle it the right way. It is counterproductive to turn negative when facing problems. You simply cannot afford to be negative. ■



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