

Towards the right thought

What is spirituality or *rab-baniyat*, to use the Quranic term? It is the elevation of man to a plane where the mind is focussed on the higher, non-material realities of a godly existence. It's opposite is materialism, a course followed all too often in this world.

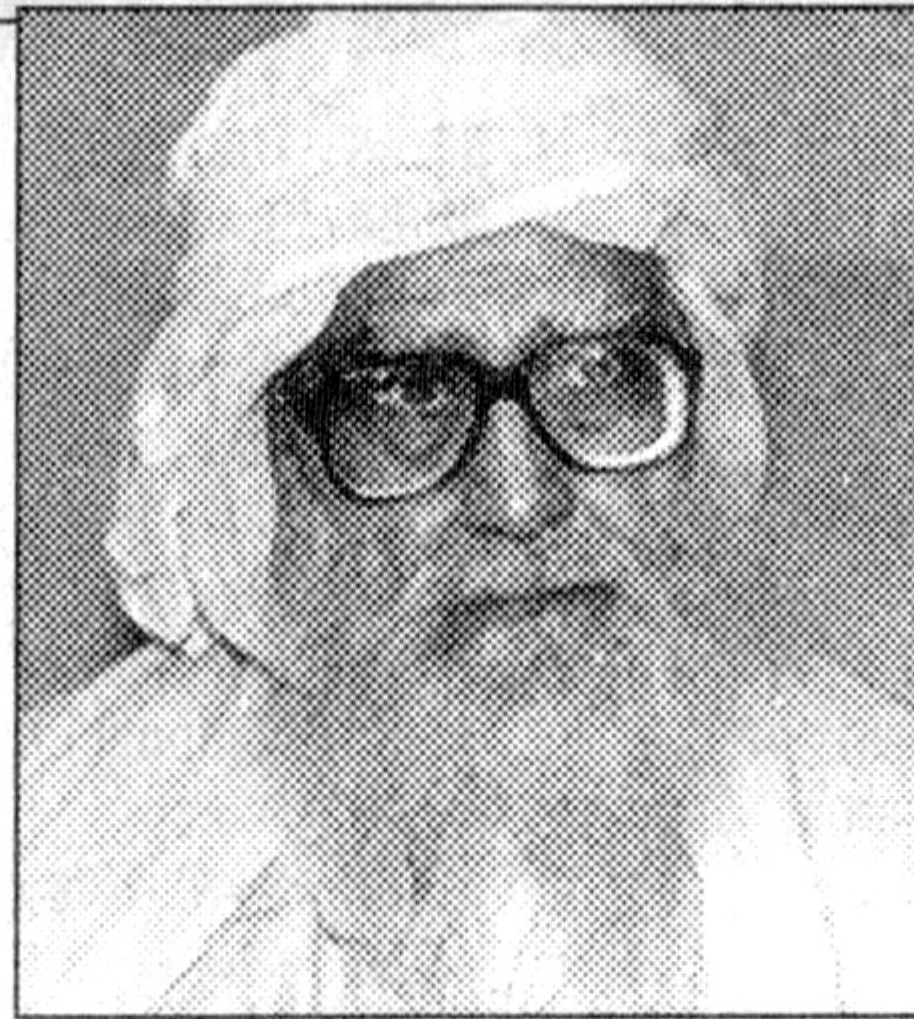
To put it another way, he who focuses on mere appearances, is material-minded. And the one who rises above it is spiritual. He obeys the injunction of the Quran: "Be devoted servants of God" (3;79) or alternatively, "O people be godly servants of Allah."

To understand what constitutes materialism, imagine yourself looking at a palatial house or an attractive car and being overcome by the desire to possess it. A person who is unmoved by these objects and the notions of luxury they convey, lives in a more rarefied sphere. For him there is little attraction in the world of superficiality, being engrossed as he is in the higher realities of a supremely spiritual life. A truly non-material person's soul exists at a profound level of spirituality. This is the unadulterated truth.

Those who live for worldly pleasures believe that gratification cannot be had except through the enjoyment of material goods. But this kind of thinking is the result of sheer ignorance. Having only experienced worldly pleasures, these people come to believe that every kind of enjoyment depends on it alone. If they were to experience spiritual pleasure they would quickly forget about material pleasures which are transient, whereas the spiritual kind may be savoured eternally.

The taste of good food is enjoyable, but it is only when the experience of eating results in an outpouring of thanksgiving to God that we attain complete pleasure. A car ride can be exhilarating, but the pleasure that comes from a deep perception of reality—or sensing the indescribably

Horizons



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unique power of God as manifested in cars, aeroplanes and all the other modern amenities created for man's comfort—is far superior to that which one experiences while travelling in a luxurious automobile.

A materially-minded person finds pleasure only in something which he or she actually experiences. The spiritual person will thank God even at the sight of another person's object. Rather, he transforms his friend's material pleasure into spiritual pleasure for himself. A materially-minded person only sees the creation while a spiritually inclined person sees the splendour of the Creator through the creation. It is obvious that the spiritual

riches accruing from the discovery of the Creator cannot be gained through objects he created.

Furthermore, in the spiritual world, there is no great difference between comfort and deprivation. What one gains from material experiences is of lesser value than what one learns from deprivation. Tears of pain give greater satisfaction than laughter.

The greatest source of pleasure is in the remembrance of God. It is this reality which finds expression in the following verse of the Quran. "Only in the remembrance of God are hearts comforted." (13: 28) Comfort here implies peace of mind that stems only from God, and not merely temporary solace. Man is an idealist by nature. Anything short of ideals only attracts fitful attention.

Existing only at the materialistic level is like descending into animality. Materialism is, in other words, a form of shallowness. The real man is one who discovers the secret of spirituality.

If in materialism there is pleasure of laughter, in spirituality, there is the pleasure of pain. If materialism is to live a life of limitations, spirituality is to live free.

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