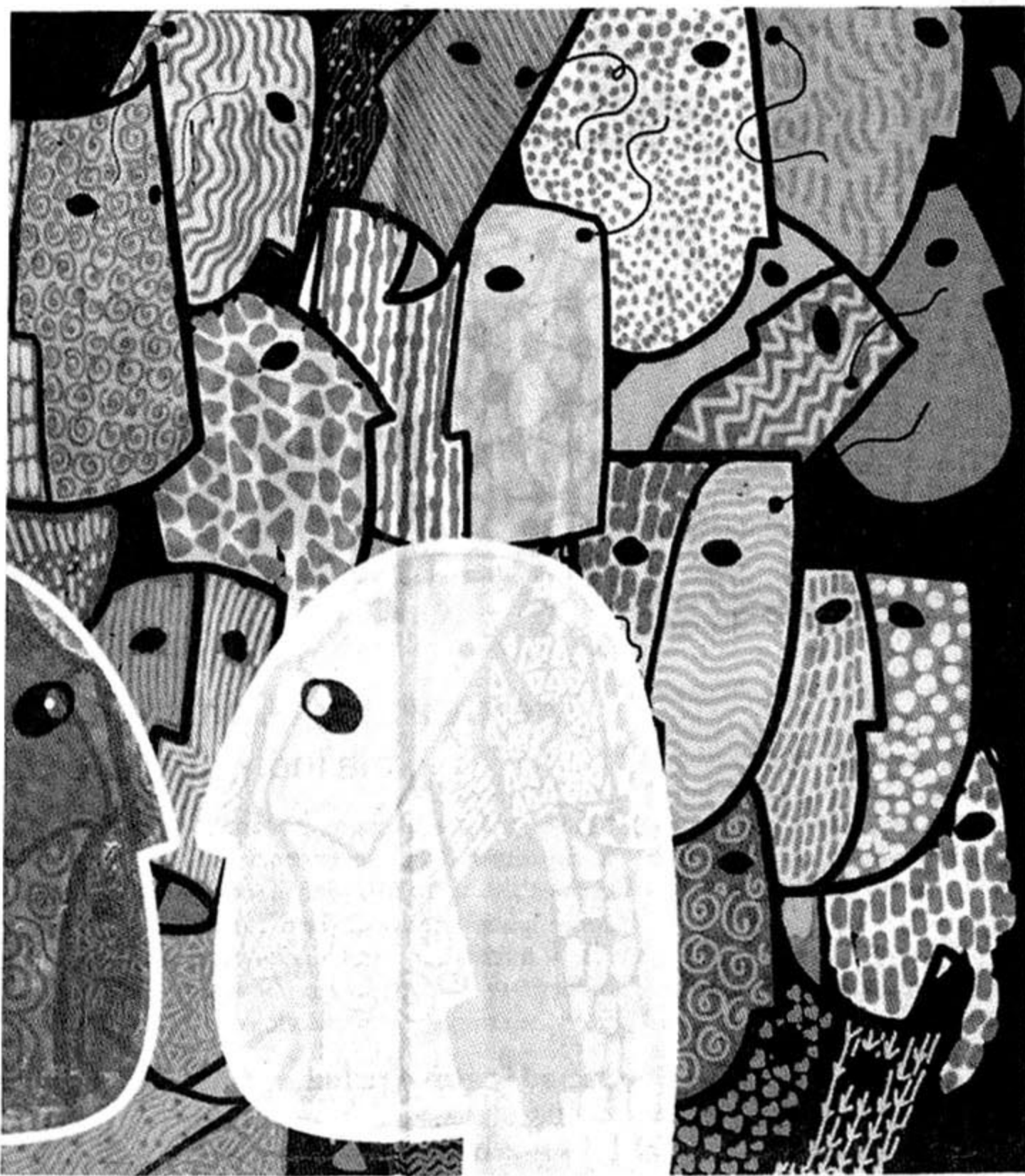


'Self-doubt might not be a bad thing'

True hope is based on reality whereas false hope thrives on sheer romanticism, says MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN, answering questions sent by young readers



■ People generally confuse individual peace and social peace. Social peace is an ideal that is difficult to achieve, but individual peace is completely achievable. You cannot control society, but your mind can be completely under your control. Develop the quality of tolerance and you will be able to live in peace, even when there is no peace in the outside world. Peace of mind basically depends on one's thinking, and not on the state of social affairs.

What hampers spiritual growth?

Bhavneet Kaur, Bombay

■ In my opinion, it is excessive materialism that hampers spiritual growth. Material goods are a necessity for comfortable living, but when you start chasing materialism you run the risk of losing your spirituality.

Can we ever be free of negative feelings such as self-doubt?

Zakwan Nadvi, New Delhi

■ No, but self-doubt is not necessarily a bad thing. It has a positive aspect, too. Self-doubt awakens your mind; it makes you reassess your plans; your mode of life. If you engage in introspection, it can become a great source of learning for you, but don't ever allow self-doubt to overpower you.

What is the difference between adjustment and compromise?

Srishti Soni, New Delhi

■ There is a great difference. Adjustment is a principle of wisdom; it is the well-considered behaviour of a wise person; while compromise is a form of expediency, designed merely to secure one's interests without following any principle.

We are often told that we should always remain hopeful. How different is this state of positive hopefulness from having false hopes? How can we differentiate between the two?

Basit Jamal, New Delhi

■ The difference between the two is very clear. True hope is based on reality, while false hope is based on sheer romanticism. When you examine a situation and take a realistic view of things, you have the right to be hopeful, but when you ignore the realities and adopt an ostrich-like approach, then, you are entertaining false hopes. ■

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How should we manage our ego?

Gurpreet Kaur, New Delhi

■ It is very easy. They say that when a peacock sees its beautiful feathers, it becomes proud, but when it looks at its ugly feet, it gets modest. The same is true of human beings. Each of us have our plus and minus points. Those who see just their pluses often become egoists, but those who look at both tend to be more modest. So, when you feel like being arrogant about qualities you possess, turn your attention to the other side of your personality and focus on your shortcomings; everyone has some. And you will immediately turn modest. This, to my mind, is the easiest formula for remaining modest and humble.

Is it necessary to exercise restraint over our desires? Wouldn't frequent restraining of desires lead to the stifling of personality?

Naghma Siddiqi, Gurgaon

■ Our desires are unlimited, but our capacity to fulfil those desires is limited. So, it is only realistic to keep our desires

in check. If we fail to control our desires, we will fall into despair sooner than later. No one can afford to follow a path which leads to despair. Controlling one's desires is preferable to falling into despair.

It is a fallacy to say that restraining desires leads to the stifling of personality. Human desire can be unlimited and trying to fulfil them can lead to negative rather than positive development of the personality. There are any number of scientific studies to buttress this point.

Does praying to God help in developing one's personality?

Rajat Malhotra, New Delhi

■ Yes. Prayer means establishing contact with the higher reality and that higher reality is the source of all kinds of inspiration. It is also a source of great solace. So prayer, if it is genuine, will certainly help in developing focus and making you a better person.

How can one find peace of mind?

Idrees Menon, Raipur

