

Admit mistakes and seek pardon

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

If from a vessel containing water a single drop is found to be brackish, it means that all of the liquid is undrinkable. Much the same is true of the human personality. Small instances of an individual's behaviour and quite short interludes in his company are generally sufficient to tell us what his overall personality is like. A thoughtless remark, an unfair manoeuvre, a failure to give much-needed sympathy or support, a devious transaction — all these are the plain indicators, which indicate the lack of integrity or callousness of the person you are dealing with.

The human personality has the same homogeneity as water. A single human weakness cannot be considered in isolation, as if it were an exception. It has to be looked upon as being representative of the entire personality. If an individual proves unreliable in one matter, he is likely to evince the same unreliability in other matters.

There is only one kind of person who is an exception to that rule, and that is the one who subjects his own behaviour to constant re-appraisal, who is continually scrutinising himself for weaknesses and faults and who, once having found such faults, wastes no time in rooting them out. This kind of introspection has been greatly emphasised in the Quran.

A man who has made a mistake can completely erase the marks of what is an unfortunate experience for others by admitting his mistake and begging forgiveness. Some people are pricked by their consciences, but do nothing to assuage the ruffled feelings of others, thinking that to do so would be sheer weakness and would mean a loss of face. Such people can never have healthy social relationships and can never win the respect of their fellow men. They do not realise that a man displays his true mettle when he sees his own wrong actions for what they are, and humbly asks forgiveness.