

Always be morally responsible

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

Publius Syrus, a Roman writer of the 1st century BC, who wrote in Latin, is recorded as having said: "A good opportunity is seldom presented and is easily lost." It is a matter of common circumstance that chances to make progress in this world do not present themselves at every juncture. They are few and far between. But most people, failing to realise their special importance, are unable to grasp them in time. Thus, golden opportunities are lost forever, and all that remains is regret.

The same is true of the Hereafter, but on a scale barely appreciable by human beings. Everyone, of course, has been given opportunities in the present world to act in the interests of his own salvation in the life after death. But these are opportunities that very seldom present themselves. And then death — the great cut-off point — comes and puts an end to opportunities for all time. After death, when man's eyes are opened, he receives a severe shock. Now he finds himself doomed to eternal regret at having squandered unparalleled opportunities, thanks to his own ignorance, foolishness and lack of any sense of timelines.

Everyone in this world should behave as morally responsible and everyone is given equal opportunities to do so. Yet, in the Hereafter, there will be some who will have missed these opportunities, while there will be others who will pass the divine test because of opportunities seized and turned to good advantage. The Quran says: "Warn them of the Day of Gathering which is sure to come: when some group will be in the Garden, and some group will be in the Fire" (42:7).

This ultimate reckoning should make us examine our lives with greater earnestness. And once death intervenes, looking for alternative possibilities beyond the grave becomes meaningless. There we are ineluctably faced with an eternity of success or an eternity of failure.