

Cultural differences are relative in nature

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

People appear to be quite different from one another, but all of them have descended from one pair of parents, Adam and Eve.

When God decreed that a creature such as man should come into existence, He created an archetypal couple — a male and a female — in order to initiate human procreation. According to a verse in the Quran: “Mankind, We have created you from a male and female, and made you into peoples and tribes, so that you might come to know each other. The noblest of you in God’s sight is the one who fears God most. God is all knowing all aware” (49:13).

As the number of humans increased, they began spreading over different parts of the globe, until the entire world, over a long period of time, came to be inhabited by men and women.

Geographical conditions vary in different places, some parts being very hot and others very cold. Eating habits also vary from place to place, in some parts non-vegetarian food form the staple diet, in others, vegetarian food.

Such geographic and cultural differences resulted gradually in variations in people’s skin colour, features, height, temperament, etc.

Yet all these differences are relative, not real. These are only for the sake of identification, and are not meant to form the basis for discriminatory practices or the establishment of superiority.

Most of the evil in this world is caused by people having come to regard apparent differences as real ones. As a matter of origin, all human beings are equal. If there is any basis for discrimination between them, it can only be in terms of how pious and God-fearing they are. Difference between one person and another has to be based on real attributes and not just on appearances.