

Differences are a part of creation

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

Differences between people are a part of nature, resulting directly from the Creation Plan of God. This fact is explained in the chapter entitled Hud of the Quran: "If your Lord had wished, He would have made mankind into one community. As it is, they will not cease to dispute and to this end He has created them [all], except for those to whom your Lord has shown mercy" (11:118-119).

It is a fact that there are differences between individuals as well as groups. But this is not an evil: it is actually good for humanity. Difference is not simply difference: it reflects diversity and the unlimited nature of men and women. Healthy difference, inviting discussion and dialogue and intellectual exchange, leads to development, while a "no difference" situation leads to stagnation. The acceptance of such ideas, leading to development in every field, both intellectual and physical, contributes greatly to progress. Man has unlimited potential, but needs competition and challenge to bring it forth and turn it into actuality. Difference, in providing an issue for discussion, throws down such a challenge and, by meeting this challenge, you are able to discover new areas of facts, new fields of progress. Minus difference, man would fall into an intellectual slumber and become little better than a statue.

But there have to be certain pre-conditions if difference is to be a healthy social asset. In spite of differences you have to remain peaceable. You have to be sincere and objective, so that the difference may be expressed in a disciplined manner. You have to express your differences peacefully, and at the same time be open-minded enough to allow others to freely express their views. Difference with peace is a blessing, but difference with violence is a problem.