

Realisation required before belief

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

Preparedness for any important course of action is universally desirable. To lead the Islamic life, it is a basic requirement. The first principle of Islam is imaan, but before imaan there is a preparatory step — marafat, or realisation. Narrating the story of a group of believers, the Quran says: “When they listen to what has been sent down to the messenger, you see their eyes overflowing with tears, because of the truth they recognise. They say, Our Lord, we believe, so count us among those who bear witness” (5:83).

This verse refers to a very important principle of Islam, that is, before belief, realisation is required. When an individual accepts Islam, he recites the kalmah of Islam, but before doing so, he must discover or realise the truth. It is discovery or realisation that makes the recitation of the kalmah meaningful. Without realisation, the mere recitation of the kalmah has no value.

This principle applies to every tenet of Islam — the nafil prayer before the farz prayer, some days of fasting in Shahban before fasting in the month of Ramadan, and so on. This preparatory principle is important in all Islamic practices. It is like a starter before taking a meal. It is this preliminary course that gives life to all Islamic practices.

This activates one’s consciousness before entering into any Islamic practice. It gives one a prepared mind and makes one a prepared personality: only a prepared mind or a prepared personality can practice Islam in its true spirit. One who does not have a prepared mind, or is not a prepared personality, will not be fully competent to perform Islamic duties.

Before becoming a practicing Muslim, one should be a realised person. It is realisation of divine truth that makes one able to become a practicing Muslim in the true sense.