

We must practise patience as a duty

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

If you happen to be in an open field when it starts to rain, you hasten to find shelter. This is not cowardice, this is realism. Similarly, when there is an earthquake, you immediately leave your home for an open space. This too is not defeatism, but an acknowledgement of the reality of nature. Where some difficulty arises between man and nature, the solution to the problem lies only in acknowledgment, not in confrontation.

The system of rains and earthquakes is part of the scheme of God. Man cannot change this. Man only has it in his power to devise strategies to save himself from harm. The only way to do so is to adopt the principle of avoidance and save himself from extinction.

Patience and avoidance are not signs of cowardice or a defeatist mentality. They are simply realistic approaches. This is necessary because the Creator has given man freedom for the purpose of putting him to the test. Man sometimes makes the right use, sometimes the wrong use of his freedom. Even if you start fighting everyone, you cannot snatch away their freedom, as this freedom is given to them by the very Creator of the universe. Efforts to deprive others of their freedom are futile and will result only in your own suffering.

In such a state of affairs there is only one possible attitude. And that is known as patience. That is, even when faced with bitterness and unpleasantness from others, you must continue your life's journey by avoidance.

Patience is given utmost importance in Islam. The Quran says: "Truly those who persevere patiently will be requited without measure" (39:10).

You should never feel that it is only up to others to practice patience and avoid friction. Patience and avoidance of strife are the social duties of everyone without exception.