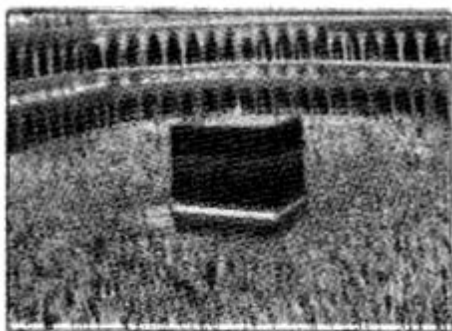


All men are equal

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



After a significant incident in Mecca, the Prophet received a revelation from God Almighty, which has been recorded in the Quran in chapter Abasa (He Frowned). The chapter begins thus:

“He frowned and turned away when the blind man approached him, for how can you know that he might seek to purify himself, or take heed and derive benefit from (Our) warning? As for him who was indifferent, you eagerly attended to him — though you are not to be blamed if he would not purify himself — but as for one who comes to you eagerly and in awe of God you pay him no heed” (80:1-10).

The background to these verses is that, one day, the Prophet was engrossed in a conversation with some influential persons of Mecca, hoping to convince them —

and, through them, the Meccan community at large — of the truth of his message. At that point, he was approached by one of his followers, Abd Allah ibn Umm Maktum, who was blind and poor — with the request for a repetition or elucidation of certain earlier passages of the Quran. Annoyed by this interruption of what he momentarily regarded as a more important endeavour, the Prophet “frowned and turned away” from the blind man — and was immediately, there and then, reproved by the revelation of the first ten verses of this chapter. In later years he often greeted Ibn Umm Maktum with these words of humility: “Welcome to him on whose account God has rebuked me!”

This incident, recorded in the Quran, teaches the universal lesson that every human is worthy of respect and should be treated on an equal basis, regardless of whether he is poor or rich, a common man or a highly placed person. All are equal in the eyes of God. If there is any difference, it is only between the Creator and his creatures.