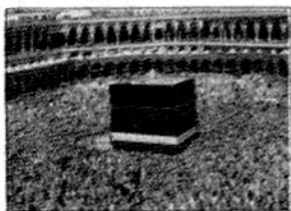


The forbidden tree

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



The story of Adam and Eve is common to both the Bible and the Quran. According to the Quranic account, God created Adam and his wife, Eve, and settled the pair in Paradise. Where was this paradise? The Bible says: "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed" (Genesis, 2:8).

This was the beginning of the social life of man. God gave both Adam and Eve a basic direction:

"God said, 'O Adam! Settle, you and your wife, in Paradise and eat freely from it anywhere you may wish. Yet do not approach this tree lest you become wrongdoers'" (2:35).

The "forbidden tree", in one sense, was a symbol of social taboos. Breaking these taboos means involving oneself in social wrongdoing, as

mentioned in the Quranic verse.

When God created Adam and Eve, it was not just about creating a pair; it was about creating the first unit of human society.

Adam and Eve were not created to live simply as a pair forever but were destined to start a generation; and form a society complete in every respect, subsequently paving the way for the building of a civilisation.

Adam and Eve were given complete freedom but their freedom was a restricted freedom. They were to refrain from all activities which would go against their fellow men. In other words, they were forbidden to indulge in any kind of social wrongdoing, otherwise they would fail to fulfil the divine plan.

What is "wrongdoing"? Anything that proves to be harmful to one's fellow men is wrongdoing.

In other words, Adam and Eve were required to follow the well-known formula: You are free but your freedom ends where another's nose begins. This was the first lesson given to mankind.