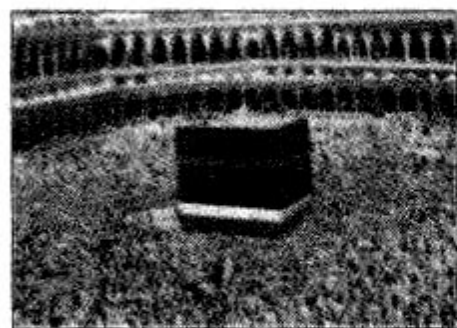


ISLAM

The secondary role

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



According to the Islamic principle, all human beings, both men and women, are equal. But it is also a fact that every man is Mr Different and every woman is Ms Different. In such a situation, Islam gives a very practical formula — people are equal as regards respect, but they are different in the roles they play in life.

The Quranic chapter *Al-Araf* (The Heights) refers to an instance of what happened when this law was flouted. The translation of the relevant verses is as follows:

“Recite to them the tale of the man to whom We gave Our signs, but who then cast them to one side and Satan overtook him. And he became one of those who went astray — if it had been Our will, We could have used these signs to exalt him, but instead he clung to the earth

and followed his own desires.” (7:175-176)

These verses refer to a well-known personality of Arabia, a contemporary of the Prophet of Islam, Umayya bin Al-Salt. He was known as an intelligent person and enjoyed a great reputation in Arab society. When he came to know that Muhammad claimed to be the Prophet of God, he became angry, because he thought that he, not Muhammad, should have been appointed as the Prophet. From this point onwards, he became hostile towards the Prophet and remained so up to the last moment of his life.

Citing this example, the Quran stresses the necessity for everyone to accept that in every society there are two different roles: the primary and the secondary. According to the law of nature, only a few people can play the former role. Others must willingly accept the latter. This is the law of nature. There is no escape from it.

A society can be run smoothly only when its members are ready to follow this formula of nature.