

Preaching is not a game

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

A sage once said that the desire to preach should have the same compulsive quality about it as the desire to satisfy any other normal human urge. Preaching is not like playing a record; nor should it be aimed at eliciting applause from an appreciative audience. Preaching is an externalisation of inner conviction. The Prophet of Islam was born in Mecca in 570 AD. He was made Prophet in 610 AD, and started his mission of conveying the message of God to people. One of the verses revealed to him was: "Say, 'I have been commanded to be the first of those who submit'" (6:14).

Preaching is thus communication to others of a discovered reality, to be a living witness to a truth long hidden from people's eyes. This does not mean just putting a few words together; it is an extremely difficult task. One can only accomplish this task when one feels so desperate an urge to convey one's message that one is ready in the process to face unpopularity and self-sacrifice.

The same applies to writing. Before putting pen to paper, one should study so much that knowledge of itself starts overflowing from one's mind. It is only after sifting through all the available material on any relevant topic, and feeling an irresistible urge to add something of one's own, that one should begin to write. Those who write without experience or inspiration are only defacing the paper on which they write, and those who speak without feeling the compulsion to do so are only adding to noise pollution.

Preaching is not a game: it is representation of God on earth; it is only those who have effaced themselves before God who qualify for this privilege. Those who try to preach without such qualifications do greater harm than good.