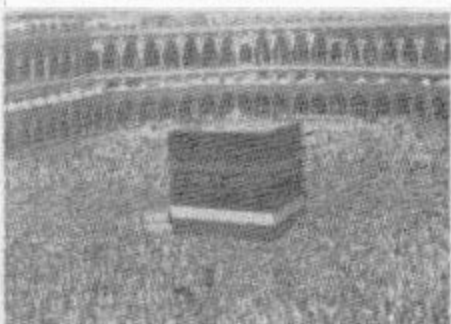


Education matters

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



The first divine revelation received by the Prophet of Islam was, "Read! In the name of your Lord, who created ... who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know" (96:1-5). According to a tradition, one night in the year 610 AD, the Prophet of Islam was secluded in the cave of Mount Hira. Suddenly the angel Gabriel appeared and said, "O Muhammad, read!" Prophet Muhammad, being unlettered, said, "I cannot read." The angel again said, "O Muhammad, read!" The Prophet repeated his answer. For the third time, the angel said, "O Muhammad, read!" But again the Prophet said he could not read. Then the angel embraced him and he began reading the revealed words.

This story gives a great lesson: a lesson of struggle. It should be interpreted as meaning: read even if you

cannot read, learn even if you cannot learn.

From then on the Prophet and his companions availed of every opportunity to acquire learning and education. This is illustrated by the following sequence of events: After the migration to Medina in 622 AD, the Prophet and his companions were attacked by the Meccans. The Prophet and his companions won the war and were able to capture seventy of their opponents. But the Prophet of Islam did not mete out any punishment to them. They were educated persons. The Prophet told them that if any of them could educate ten of Medina's children his service would be accepted as ransom and he would be set free.

It was more than likely that these people might again start a war against the Prophet. But judging by this incident, the Quranic message is that even if you are unlettered, try to learn, and learn even if you have no teachers other than those with whom you do not have good relations.