12391 - The most honoured of you with Allaah is the one who is the most pious

the question

What does Islam say about racial discrimination?

Detailed answer

All people are the descendants of one man and one woman, believer and kaafir, black and white, Arab and non-Arab, rich and poor, noble and lowly.

Islam does not pay attention to differences in colour, race or lineage. All people come from Adam, and Adam was created from dust. In Islam, differentiation between people is based on faith (eemaan) and piety (taqwaa), by doing that which Allaah has enjoined and avoiding that which Allaah has prohibited. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allaah is that (believer) who has At-Taqwa [i.e. he is one of the Muttaqoon (the pious)]. Verily, Allaah is All-Knowing, All Aware”

[al-Hujuraat 49:13]

Islam regards all people as equal as far as rights and duties are concerned People are equal before the law (sharee’ah), as Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Whoever works righteousness — whether male or female — while he (or she) is a true believer (of Islamic Monotheism) verily, to him We will give a good life (in this world with respect, contentment and lawful provision), and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do (i.e. Paradise in the Hereafter)” [al-Nahl 16:97]

Faith, truthfulness and piety all lead to Paradise, which is the right of the one who acquires these attributes, even if he is one of the weakest or lowliest of people. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And whosoever believes in Allaah and performs righteous good deeds, He will admit him into Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise) to dwell therein forever. Allaah has indeed granted for him an excellent provision” [al-Talaaq 65:11]

Kufr, arrogance and oppression all lead to Hell, even if the one who does these things is one of the richest or noblest of people. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“But those who disbelieved (in the Oneness of Allaah – Islamic Monotheism) and denied Our Ayaat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.), they will be the dwellers of the Fire, to dwell therein forever. And worst indeed is that destination” [al-Taghaabun 64:10]

The advisors of the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) included Muslim men of all tribes, races and colours. Their hearts were filled with Tawheed and they were brought together by their faith and piety – such as Abu Bakr from Quraysh, ‘Ali ibn Abi Taalib from Bani Haashim, Bilaal the Ethiopian, Suhayb the Roman, Salmaan the Persian, rich men like ‘Uthmaan and poor men like ‘Ammaar, people of means and poor people like Ahl al-Suffah, and others.

They believed in Allaah and strove for His sake, until Allaah and His Messenger were pleased with them. They were the true believers.

“Their reward with their Lord is ‘Adn (Eden) Paradise (Gardens of Eternity), underneath which rivers flow. They will abide therein forever, Allaah will be pleased with them, and they with Him. That is for him who fears his Lord”

[al-Bayyinah 98:8 – interpretation of the meaning]