

It's best to avoid unnecessary conflict

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

The Prophet of Islam started his mission in Meca in 610 AD. At the time he used to pray by adopting the Kaba as the kiblah. Then in 622 he migrated to Madinah where some Jewish tribes had settled. The Prophet then adopted the Jewish kiblah for his prayers over a period of 15 or 16 months. Then he again turned his face towards the Kaba as the kiblah for his prayers. This event is referred to in the Quran in the chapter entitled Al-Baqarah (The Heifer):

“But even if you should produce every kind of sign for those who have been given the Book, they would never accept your prayer direction, nor would you accept their prayer direction: nor would any of them accept one another's direction. If, after all the knowledge you have been given, you yield to their desires, then, you shall surely become a transgressor” (2:145).

This Prophetic example embodied an important

principle: avoid unnecessary controversy. At the time, the Jews were a dominant community in Madinah (known as Yathrib at the time). For centuries they had been using the Dome of the Rock (Jerusalem) as their kiblah for prayer. It was sacred not only for the Jewish community but also, because of Jewish influence, for the non-Jewish community.

In such a situation, adopting the Kaba as the kiblah was rather exceptional. In the early months, the Prophet had wanted to avoid unnecessary controversy, so he adopted the Jewish kiblah for his prayers five times a day. From this Prophetic event we can derive a general principle, not only with regard to prayers, but in other spheres of life also.

This principle is very important; it saves you from unnecessary conflict. It gives you the opportunity to continue your mission in society without a break.

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