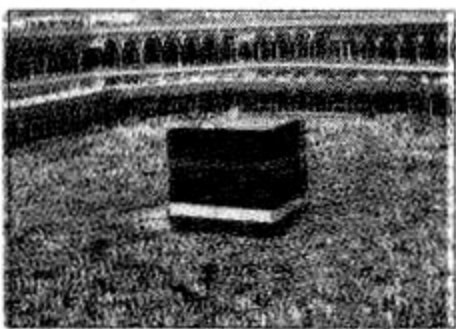


ISLAM

Successful dialogue

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



Abraham was a Prophet of God. Prophet Abraham brought the message of *tawheed* (the oneness of God) to King Nimrod of Babylonia. But the king refused to accept his message. A part of their conversation is quoted in the Quran as follows:

Have you not heard of him who argued with Abraham about his Lord, because God had bestowed the kingdom upon him? Abraham said, "My Lord is the one who gives life and brings death." He answered, "I (too) give life and bring death!" Abraham said, "God brings up the sun from the east, so bring it up yourself from the west." Then the disbeliever was confounded. God does not guide the wrongdoers. (2:258)

This conversation between the Prophet and the King gives us a very important principle of dialogue. That

is, if the response of the other party is not positive, do not follow the futile course of insistence. See the mind of the other party and adopt an alternative form of dialogue. When the Prophet said that God Almighty was the Lord who gave life and brought death, the King said he could do likewise. This answer was wrong, but the Prophet avoided repeating himself and, with a change of stance, he raised a different point. His second point was so compelling that the King became speechless.

This instance gives us a good example of successful dialogue. The best arguer is one who is not obsessed with his own mind, but is able to see the other party's mind, which he tries to address.

It is a fact that there are different kinds of mindsets; everyone sees things from his own angle. So, to convince the other party, you have to understand the mindset of others. You must try to address others' minds, even at the cost of making a change in your argument. This is the right way to have a successful dialogue.