

From the Spiritual Tree

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

August 30, 2009 (Sunday)

Introduction

"*From the Spiritual Tree*" has often been the theme of my talks. But this *tree*, planted adjacent to the balcony of my house had dried up in this season. I thought it would never be the same again but the recent rains brought it back to life. Leaflets sprouted on the branches and in a short span of time it became sprawling green again. This occurrence gave me a great lesson. The coming back to life of the *spiritual tree* was a manifestation of this verse of the Quran:

"He brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living. That is God." (6:95)

Lessons I learnt

Every end marks a new beginning

I realised that as an individual goes through life's experiences – good and bad – they often make him feel that he is nearing a dead end, foraying beyond which seems impossible. But in reality life teaches us that *we must not consider any experience as the end because every end leads to a new beginning*. That is, man must not lose hope under any circumstances. This principle holds true from the point of view of both worldly and other-worldly affairs. Throughout its workings, nature illustrates this principle for man to derive lesson from it. After every night, comes the day and so no situation is an end. *The same holds true for death*.

While death marks the end of *continuity* in this world, it defines the beginning of another continuity in the world hereafter. In other words, though man dies and departs from this world, it is actually the beginning of the next phase of his life in the hereafter. Death therefore, is not an *end*.

Life is a process. A human being is born; he grows, receives education and after going through a series of stages in his life, eventually reaches death. During this process of life in this world, man experiences both sorrow and success. But after death another life begins. The second life would be different from the present life as it would be free from all kind of negative experiences. According to a verse in the Quran,

"The people of Paradise shall be happily occupied."(36:55)

That is, unlike the activities of the present world that are marred by the prospect of failure or success, the activities in paradise would be a source of eternal joy for its blessed inhabitants.

Revival: When NO becomes YES

Another learning imparted to me by this tree was the conscious realization of the eternal hopefulness of this world. This feeling aroused within me a tempest of gratefulness towards the Creator who bestowed us with endless opportunities, come what may.

Thinkers have always believed that if a civilization declines, it can never revive itself again. This view is unanimously accepted. But according to me this assumption lacks basis. China for instance, has proved this theory incorrect.

China was once a great civilization which gave to the world many things such as paper, printing press etc. It however saw a gradual decline, but today it has risen again and established itself as an emerging superpower of the world. Earlier, Chinese leaders (like Mao Zedong) believed that *power flows from the barrel of the gun*. But they failed to revive themselves with *gun*. Later however, new leaders emerged in China who reorganized the nation. These new leaders **detached political power from the industries and gave paramount importance to economic development** instead. This led to great development in China.

Here I am reminded of a verse from the Quran, according to which:

“A barrier shall stand behind such people till the Day they are raised up again.”(23:100)

This verse illustrates that even after death (or decline); man only reaches an interval (or a barrier). The continuity does not cease to exist in this world, it may only halt so that the new beginning can be adequately supported.

Failure is caused by that 'one' reason

The green tree which stands by my house was receiving everything needed for it to flourish - sunlight, oxygen and minerals. The only component missing was water. But it was the absence of this one component that dried up the tree. Nature understood this and gave this very component to the tree, the tree flourished yet again. Same is the case of man (individual or society); generally only one aspect is amiss due to which he meets failure. We must search for this aspect (or shortcoming), discover it and work upon it.

For example, a man came to me in a discouraged state saying that he had lost all hope from life. He had started various businesses but all had failed. Then I told him that he was bestowed with all qualities; intelligence, good health, etc. But the one quality which he did not have was perseverance. Due to lack of perseverance, all the businesses which he started had shut down. Had he been perseverant he would have surely been successful. Another person came to me with a similar story. I discovered that the cause of failure of this person was egoism. This man was intelligent and had all other qualities to run a successful business, but because of his arrogance he could never get along with people and met failure everywhere. He had relinquished the virtue of modesty, a pre-requisite to success. According to a Hadith,

“He who adopts modesty is raised in stature by God.”

Discern the ‘clue’ that is present with every problem

Upon being confronted by a problem, people oftentimes do not try to understand and find its root-cause but react in stead due to their pre-conceived notions. **It is important to bear in mind that every problem brings with it a clue that tells about its solution.** But this clue can be perceived by those who think rationally and do not react to the problem agitatedly.

An example will illustrate this point of looking for clues rather than becoming angry when faced with problem. On the staircase outside this building many young boys get together and while away their time. They undoubtedly cause nuisance for the passer bys. One of our companions faced this problem on almost a regular basis while taking the staircase to enter this building. Instead of getting angry, he dealt with those young boys in a well considered manner.

These young boys always greeted him with *Asslam-Alaikum*. One day when as per the routine, they greeted him; our companion asked them whether they knew the meaning of this phrase that they used so often. He explained to them that it meant “May peace be upon you”. In other words it is to convey to the other person that he is safe from you. He added that though they were greeting the passer-bys with peace but in reality they were creating a nuisance. On listening to this, these boys became embarrassed and showed repentance. Had he spoken angrily with the boys, they would have not shown repentance.

This explains the fact that when one addresses a person with a cool mind, one actually addresses his conscience but when one speaks angrily then what arouses is ego. **When a person's conscience is aroused he becomes repentant, while if his arrogance is aroused he becomes angry and gives negative reaction.** The reaction therefore depends on what is being addressed.

Ideological base provided by the Quran

Addressing the mind of man and aligning him to the right path is a very crucial task. Quran does not list the basic human values such as truth, honesty, fulfilling promises, tolerance and modesty at one place but cites them at different instances. Because merely giving a list of human values will never make man follow it; we have to provide an ideological base for these human values so that man abides by it.

The ideological base in Islam has *three* aspects (bases). The first ideological base for following human values is as per the **Creation Plan of God**. According to this Plan, man is a social animal and the human society is an interdependent society. No one can do his work in isolation. Due to this interdependence one is forced to possess a human-friendly nature and have respect for fellow beings. Thus, interdependence creates a compulsive situation in which one has to acknowledge the other person.

The other point is that according to the Quran, all human beings have descended from the same parents. All men and women therefore are blood brothers and blood sisters. Thinking like this arouses familial emotions for those we become acquainted with – directly or indirectly. This is the basis on which the moral edifice can rest as it would ensure that man remains more cognizant of the emotions displayed while dealing with his fellow beings.

The third point is given in a Hadith,

“Those who do not acknowledge men will not even acknowledge God.”(Abu Dawud)

The acknowledgement of God is the highest form of worship or *ibadat*. True acknowledgement of God is the ticket to Paradise. According to a verse in the Quran,

“God has not placed two hearts in any man's body.”(33:4)

This verse indicates that man cannot simultaneously love and hate. If he does not acknowledge man, he will not be able to acknowledge God. Because when we do not acknowledge the people around us, we develop a psychology of not acknowledging and our entire being radiates this attitude of non-thankfulness. This psychology even prevents man from acknowledging God. Thus, he will be bereft of the highest form of worship. In other words, **when a man does not acknowledge other men then he is taking the risk of being deprived of Paradise**. This is a tremendous risk. Human values are thus connected to the Hereafter and he who doesn't follow or abide by them is risking Paradise.

Understanding Hell and Paradise

It is not difficult for man to understand hell and paradise. He can fathom them by keeping the present world in mind. For example, the natural habitat of a fish is the ocean. An attempt to make the fish thrive in the desert will only hasten its end. Similarly, as God created man, he provided them with a temporary abode, a requirement for the completion of his test. Man therefore must lead his life in accordance with God's Creation Plan so that he can reach his final abode. Failure to comply with God's Plan would result in man's expulsion from the eternal abode and his being consigned to eternal damnation. Therefore the Bible states, *"Those who did not mend their ways in this world will bite their tongues, eternally."*

In other words, when the testing period gets over, those who fail would be separated from the righteous ones. The earth which is imperfect will be made perfect and the truthful alone shall dwell in it.

Conclusion

A poet once said, *"A green tree has wisdom in every leaf, for the one who discovers it."* Active thinking therefore is imperative to draw any learning from our surroundings – from understanding that every end marks a new beginning to being able to perceive the solution that the problem presents - life is the name of discoveries made on a daily basis. It is a process that must continue unhindered.

May God enable us to think and act wisely so that we continue to receive His blessings!