

Spreading the word of God

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Introduction

Today, I read an article published in *The Times of India*, which said that Myanmar was to equip itself with a nuclear bomb. Myanmar is a small country with not a very strong economy. The argument it gave for equipping itself with a nuclear bomb was to ensure “*nuclear deterrence*”, that is, to prevent itself from a nuclear attack. As I read it, I realised that man had become blind to the extent that he was extending his efforts beyond his reach so as to be able to protect himself from an *unsure* nuclear attack but was doing absolutely nothing to protect himself from a great and imminent earthquake or the Doomsday. In other words, nations are busy making themselves nuclear deterrent but no preparation was being done to become doomsday deterrent.

Worldly and Other-Worldly affairs

An objective study of the Quran makes clear that it was revealed to make man aware of the creation plan of God and warn man about the impending Doomsday. As per the scheme of things laid down by God, this world was not created for eternity and hence must come to an end. This end will be followed by the Day of Judgement where all people will face God Almighty and be accountable to Him.

The Quran clearly distinguishes between two kinds of affairs: *worldly* and *other worldly*. The responsibility of the worldly affairs has been taken up by God. This is explained in the following Quranic verse:

“There is not a living creature on the earth but it is for God to provide its sustenance.” (11:6)

Through this verse, **God has given the surety of managing the worldly affairs of man.** For example, God provides for oxygen, water, sunlight etc. for man’s sustenance in this world.

However, **God has not taken the guarantee for other-world or the Hereafter.** It is to make man aware about what he must do for his other worldly affairs that Quran was revealed. The following tradition explains that the Prophets of God were sent to warn man to prepare for the other world and not to help them with their worldly affairs. While in Mecca, when Prophet Muhammad told a group of farmers that he was the Prophet of God, they started asking him help them in horticulture in the desert. To their plea, the Prophet replied,

“I was not sent to you for this purpose.”(Ibn Hisham)

Hence, it is very important to understand that God has taken the responsibility for the affairs of the present world but no guarantee of what would happen to man in the other world. The Prophets were sent to tell people that what one sows in the present world, he will reap in the Hereafter in the form of either reward or punishment. The irony is that today, man is very busy '*managing*' his worldly affairs despite the fact that God has assumed full responsibility of providing for man's sustenance in the present world. And at the same time, he is blatantly ignoring the Hereafter - the real issue that concerns him because God has given no guarantee of man's fate in the world hereafter.

Prophets were sent as '*Warners*'

God is the controller of the laws of nature. This has been explained in the Quran as follows:

"He has regulated the sun and the moon, so that each will pursue its course for an appointed time. He ordains all things."(13:2)

The discovery of these laws is done by the scientists who explain the natural phenomenon and the reason for their occurrence. That is, scientists discover the potential that lay in nature and utilise it.

The other question is to find the purpose of life. This includes questions such as "*Why was I sent to this world?*" The answers to these questions were revealed to his Prophets by God.

While the scientists have and are busy doing their work meticulously, Muslims have miserably failed in doing what they were supposed to. This task was to follow the footsteps of the Prophets who were sent for *Inzaar* (warning). They had to tear apart the veil of unawareness from the minds of men and make them aware about the creation plan of God, about Hell and Paradise, before the arrival of the Doomsday. Describing what Prophets were sent for, a tradition states:

"The world is sleeping and I came to wake them up."

That is, Prophet was sent to tell people who created them and who is providing them with all the blessings so that when man comes before God on the Day of judgement, he cannot shroud his acts under the veil of unawareness and claim to have known nothing. It is the responsibility of the Muslims to break the unawareness of people so that they don't reach God in a state of unawareness.

Single point focus for a believer

Dawah work must be the single point focus for a believer. The following verse of the Quran provides exhortation to do dawah work,

“This Quran has been revealed to me so that through it I may warn you ad whoever it reaches.” (6:19)

Dawah is a process and not an announcement. The message of the Quran has to be spread to men in the language understandable to them and not merely recited out. This is because Quran alone is between man and God and the fate of man in the world hereafter will be decided as per the guidance provided in the Quran.

The Quran was revealed for *tadabbur* or contemplation. Today, the words have been detached from their meanings. Muslims recite the Quran with great noise to the extent that the recitation of the words of the Quran has become an art. This detachment of the meaning of the Quran from its words led to two grave losses - *first*, it deprived Muslims from the profound Quranic wisdom and *second*, it eroded away the spirit of *dawah-work* from them.

Two phases of Dawah work

The process of the spread of the message of Quran was to be carried out in two phases: traditional and scientific or age of communication.

Traditional Period

Islam came in the 7th century when neither the means of communication, nor the printing press existed and dawah could only happen by speaking, meeting with people. In his last sermon, Prophet Muhammad enjoined the believers to do the following:

“I have been sent for the whole mankind so you must spread God’s message to people on my behalf.”(Ibn Hisham)

In the pre-communication age, spreading the message to others was possible only through words or travelling in-person. This is known as *ada-e-kalima*, which was done in the traditional age by the companions of the Prophet and marked the first phase of dawah work.

Scientific Period/ Age of communication

According to another Hadith,

“No house on Earth – big or small – will remain but God’s Word shall enter into it.”
(Musnad Ahmad)

The coming true of this Hadith was possible only in the age of communication when the message of God could be spread to the entire world. This is known as *itkhal-e-kalima* and would mark the final phase of dawah work.

The two groups

In the history of Islam there was a group called the companions of the Prophet or *Ashab-e-rasul* who were the contemporaries of the Prophet and performed *dawah* work in the seventh century. According to a tradition in Muslim, the Prophet said to his Companions, “*I want to see my brothers (Ikhawan).*” The companions asked “*Are we not your brothers?*” The prophet replied, “*No, you are my companions, they will come after you.*” Hence two groups were destined to come up in the history of Islam. One was that of the companions of the Prophet or *Ashab-e-rasul* and the other is that of the brothers of the Prophet or *Ikhwan-e-rasul*. The *Ashab* were the first Prophetic Team and the *Ikhwan* are the second Prophetic Team. The Quran thus addresses the *Ashab* as, “The best nations or the (*khair-e-ummat*).”

According to a tradition, Caliph Omar once said about the group called *Ashab*, “*Those who want to be included in the team of the Ashab should fulfil its prerequisites.*” The same definition applies to those who want to be a part of the group called, *Ikhwan-e-rasul*. In other words, those who want to become the brothers of the Prophet have to fulfil its prerequisites: do *dawah* work and revive the mission of God.

Two aspects of dawah work

The word of God can be spread to all mankind only in the age of communication. There are two aspect of dawah work. One is the infrastructure of dawah and the other is the duty of dawah. The ***infrastructure for dawah*** includes means of communication, religious freedom, spirit of inquiry etc. These are conditions that are created by God to make the environment conducive to dawah work.

Man discharges his **duty** by availing the opportunities that arise from the dawah infrastructure that has been established by God. Therefore, those who want to be included in the prestigious group of *Ikhwan-e-rasul* must devote their time and energy entirely into *dawah* work.

Conclusion

The importance of spreading the message of God is highlighted through the following verse of the Quran,

“Thus We have made you a middle nation (ummat-e-wasaat).”(2:143)

This is to explain that God first revealed His message on to Prophet Muhammad through arch-angel Angel Gabriel. The Prophet then passed it over to his contemporaries. The believers then spread it to subsequent generations. Some people wrongly construe the meaning of this phrase to be ‘superior’. But in actual fact, the term ‘middle’ nation is indicative of the big responsibility of *dawah* work that lies upon the shoulders of the believers.

Another verse in the Quran explicitly conveys that,

“Strive with utmost strenuousness by means of this [Quran, to convey its message to them.]”(25:52)

The word *jihad* or struggle used in this verse has been misunderstood as fighting or violence. It means to put all your energy and resources in spreading the message of God. Those who do *dawah* work are referred to as *Ansarullah* or the helpers of God and God’s help comes only for such individuals who do *dawah* work and devote themselves entirely for the cause of God.

So, let us all come together and do our utmost to become the helpers of God!