

Itmaam-e-Noor

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Excerpt:

In his talk, the Maulana explains how God sent messengers throughout the period of history to guide man but people failed to extend support to the prophets. In fact, the contemporaries of the prophets adopted a negative attitude towards them and even tried to jeopardise the Creation Plan. As a result, only announcement took place in history and a spiritual or rabbani civilisation could not come into being. After testing man for long, God intervened.

It began with the selection of the tribe of Banu Ishmael for raising the team that would usher in the divine civilization. This team of Prophet and his Companions witnessed unusual events and eventually established an ideological empire within a short period of time. The developments that led to the formation of this ideological empire commenced a new process in history, which culminated in Western Europe. In other words, the groundwork was done within thirty years of Prophetic period and the next leap of expansion took place post-Renaissance. Today, the world has religious freedom, printing press, communication and freedom, the hidden signs of God in nature have been unfolded and provided a rational basis by scientific findings and it has now become possible to present the message of God in a rational and logical manner. This is what comprised the rabbani civilization.

The lesson:

God facilitated the next leap in history to enable the creation of a divine civilisation. If we develop the wisdom to realise how history is being managed, it shall foster our conviction in a Living God, Who took charge and managed history without abolishing man's freedom! It is this awareness that shall lead us to higher God-realisation.

Introduction

Itmaam-e-Noor is a phrase which is derived from a Quranic verse that features in two chapters of the Quran:

They want to extinguish God's light with their mouths, but God seeks only to perfect his light, no matter how those who deny the truth may abhor it.

(9:32)/ (61:8)

This verse is not limited to the Prophetic period; it gives an essence of the entire history of man. God sent messengers throughout the period of history to guide man but people failed to extend support to the prophets. Finally, God decided to intervene in history so that His Plan is brought to pass.

God created and inhabited man on Earth in order to bring about a divine or *Rabbani* civilization into existence. Such a divine civilization would be marked by preservation of the Book of God, introduction to the authentic model of leading God-oriented life, unfolding of the signs of God-realisation (*marefat*) in nature, actualization of the potential of multimedia and communication that can be used to spread the message of God, establishment of freedom and democracy and coming to end of kingship. As a part of the divine plan, successive prophets were sent for thousands of years but neither did man support them nor did he let the prophets propagate peacefully. A team, required to extend support to the prophet to usher in a spiritual civilization, never came into being. As a result, only announcement took place in history. These attempts, to foil the divine plan, are referred to in the above verse as a bid to extinguish the light of God. Man could undertake such attempts because as a part of the Creation Plan of God, he had been granted total freedom. After testing man for long, God intervened. As a result of this divine intervention, an unusual event took place and within a span of only thirty years, a huge empire came into being. This was an exception in the history of empires because ordinarily empires take several hundred years to establish (like the British Empire too several hundred years to consolidate).

Several books have been authored to analyse the sudden rise and dramatic expansion of Islam within a short time span of thirty years. In his book, “The Prophet Muhammad” (2003), leading British author and publisher Barnaby Rogerson remarks that the revolution brought about by the Prophet Muhammad was a case of super achievement. Rogerson said, "Even when viewed in an entirely secular perspective he [Prophet Muhammad] remains a superhero!" Similarly, in his book “The 100” Dr. Michael Hart lists Prophet Muhammad as the most influential man in history and further asserts that Muhammad was "supremely successful" in both the religious and secular realms.

In the book entitled, ‘Historical Role of Islam’ (1938) M.N. Roy wrote, “The expansion of Islam is the most miraculous of all miracles!” According to him, the apparently sudden rise and the dramatic expansion of Islam constitutes a fascinating chapter in the history of mankind. Rogerson reasoned this incident by calling it an accident. But such a string of events which created the opportunities for the Prophet and his Companions to establish the divine civilization cannot be underestimated by being referred to as an accident. In order to analyse the revolution, the interplay of events and their divine management will have to be taken into account.

Muslims view the phenomenon of expansion of Islam as a political event. This notion is tantamount to underestimating the Plan of God. The expansion of Islam was a phenomenon of bringing into being an ideological empire and not a political empire. This phenomenon was the only one of its kind! The principles on which this expansion was based are best illustrated by this instance. During the caliphate of Umar Faruq the Arabs had entered Iran and had proceeded to beat the Iranians in one battle after another, so that a stage had come when Rustam, as commander-in-chief of the Iranian armies, thought it prudent to invite an Islamic delegation to visit his court. When Rustam demanded to know why they had invaded his territory, Rabiyy ibn Amir, a Muslim envoy replied quite simply: "God has sent us. We have been brought here by Him so that we may turn away those of His servants, whom He wishes from the worship of creation, and bring them to the worship of God; so that we may extract them from the narrow confines of the world and set their feet on its broad, open paths. (Al Bidaya)

In other words, companions had come with an ideology and the event that followed was the establishment of an ideological empire. It was therefore not a politically motivated territorial expansion.

Divine management of events

The series of events which preceded the formation of this ideological civilization cannot be explained if divine intervention is not taken into account. Let me explain this in detail.

The first step towards ushering in a spiritual civilization was to consolidate a strong team of individuals. This process was commenced two thousand and five hundred years ago in Mecca when, according to God's planning, Abraham had to settle his son along with his mother, near Mecca, which at that time was nothing but a vast desert. The settlement of this small family in the desert was the beginning of a new phase. This generation was trained in the midst of nature, faced with different kinds of hardships. Within one thousand years a community had been created whose members were so strong in character that it was called a nation of heroes.

Prophet Muhammad was born in Mecca in 570 A.D and he started his mission in 610 A.D. He propagated the Word of God for twenty-three years and this was followed by a period of Caliphate. In the first ten years of Caliphate, Caliph Abu Bakr and Caliph Umar undertook huge consolidation efforts. As a result, within a span of thirty years, an empire came into being! Let us understand how the process of the creation of this empire was divinely managed.

It began with the selection of the tribe of Banu Ishmael for raising the team that would usher in the divine civilization. This tribe had been brought up in the desert of Mecca, away from the influence of a conditioned civilization. Inspired by God, Prophet Abraham built the Kaaba in Mecca, as the house of monotheism. Later on, as idol-worshipping became very common; Kaaba became a centre of polytheism and in an unusual manner, tribes of all surrounding regions of ancient Arab, placed their idols inside the Kaaba. This was a strange occurrence because a temple is usually devoted to a single deity and not to multiple deities but Kaaba became a central place of worship.

As a result, tribes from all over Arabia used to visit Kaaba throughout the year to pay homage to their deity and make offerings. So, an all-Arab assembly used to take place at Mecca frequently and Prophet used these occasions to propagate the Word of God. Otherwise, in the days when hardly any roads or medium of transport existed, even hundred years would not have sufficed for the Prophet to propagate his message throughout Arabia. In other words, God created such situations that entire Arab began gathering at Mecca and Prophet Muhammad got the opportunity to preach throughout Arabia while being in Mecca! This was indeed a special provisioning.

It is also important to realise how God saved Kaaba so that it could remain the congregational centre for Arabia. Let me narrate how Abraha, a Christian ruler of Yemen in Southern Arabia, attacked Mecca in 570 A.D. (the year of Prophet's birth). A religious fanatic, Abraha aimed to destroy the Kaaba by demolishing it so that Mecca no longer remained the central city of Arabia. He had with him a huge army comprising soldiers and elephants. As his army approached Mecca, the elephants refused to move ahead. Besides that, flocks of birds flew over them carrying pebbles in their beaks and claws. They showered these pebbles on Abraha's army and the whole army was afflicted by a strange disease. The army was terrified and took flight. But many of its soldiers including Abraha died on the way. This is alluded to in the Quran as follows

Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the people of the elephant? Did He not foil their strategy and send against them flock of birds, which pelted them with clay stones?

Thus He made them like stubble cropped by cattle (105)

If Abraha would have been successful in destroying Kaaba, everything would have been jeopardised. Because of Kaaba, it was possible that all-Arab assembly takes place and Prophet could disseminate the mission across Arabia.

Moreover, Arabs were seekers and free of conditioning. As a result, they quickly understood the message of the Prophet. Though polytheism had penetrated Arabia, it was superficial. Shirk in other words, was a cultural phenomenon and not a religious one. Gradually, several important people in Mecca embraced Islam.

The following Hadith is quite illustrative in this regard. On his way to Medina to embrace Islam, Khalid ibn Walid met 'Amr ibn al-'As. During a discussion between the two, Khalid said to As:

Saare zauq wale log Islam mein chale gaye. Ab Mecca mein koi na raha

[All men of taste embraced Islam and now Mecca has no one left!] **Baihaqi**

There were some opponents like Abu Jahal who had become dire transgressors and continually put obstacles in the path of dawah work. For them, God made a special arrangement at the Battle of Badr, which took place in the fourteenth year of the prophethood. At that time, those who deny the truth greatly exceeded the believers in numbers and in strength. In fact the believers were so few in number that they were powerless. In that situation, God sent an army of angels to help the believers. This is alluded to in the Quran as follows

God already helped you at Badr, when you were weak. Fear God, so that you may be grateful. [And remember] when you said to the believers, ‘Does it not suffice that your Lord helps you by sending down three thousand angels? (3:123-124)

In the outcome of this battle that lasted half a day, those who denied the truth suffered a crushing defeat and the believers achieved a decisive victory. The believers won and 70 of these dire opponents from Mecca were killed. So, when the companions returned to Medina and people congratulated them, the companions said

Hum ko kya Mubarak baad dete ho? Who toh bandhe hue unth the, humne bas unhein zabah kar diya

[Why congratulate us! They (Meccan opponents) were like tethered camels; we simply slaughtered them] **(Ibn Hisham)**

So on one hand, God made the seekers embrace Islam and on the other hand, such situations unfolded that the dire Meccan opponents got killed during the Battle of Badr. Similarly, before Prophet migrated to Medina (called Yathrib), two antagonistic tribes of the city – Aws and Khazraj – fought with one another and several transgressors were killed in the battle of Baus.

In this way, most extreme opponents from the two key cities of Arab - Mecca and Medina – no longer remained to create obstacles for the Prophetic mission. This led to a rapid spread of Islam and according to traditions,

Medina ke ghar ghar mein Islam phel gaya (Ibn Hisham)

[Islam entered into every household of Medina]

Another incident of significance is the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah where God bestowed special wisdom upon the Prophet and he took a decision which was unthinkable. Prophet had understood that while an ideological movement needs people, battle on the other hand, snatches these precious lives away! Therefore to bring about peace and end the constant war-like situation, the Prophet unilaterally agreed to all terms and conditions laid down by the opponents in the Treaty. As peace began to prevail, dawah opportunities opened up and within a span of two years, most of the people embraced Islam and entire Mecca came within its fold. Following Hudaibiyyah and the formation of a city-state in Medina, Prophet Muhammad sent deputations to all tribes of Arabia urging them to seek affiliation with Medina. Since the Prophet had previously done dawah work with these tribes, there was no antagonism. Tribes instantly began to swear allegiance to Medina and within a short span of twenty three years; the entire Arab world came within the fold of Islam!

The next clear illustration of divine succour for the prophetic mission pertains to the disintegration of two great empires that occupied the region outside Arabia. God provided for an unusual event to materialize which is quoted in the Quran as follows:

The Romans have been defeated in a nearby land. They will reverse their defeat with a victory within a few years: [for] with God rests all power of decision, first and last. On that day the believers too will have cause to rejoice, with the help of God. He helps whom He pleases” He is the Mighty, and the Merciful (30:2-5)

At the time of the advent of Islam, there were two very great empires in the world – the Christian Roman Empire and the Zoroastrian Persian Empire. There were constant clashes between these two. In the year 603 A.D., Iran (Persia) attacked the Roman Empire, taking advantage of certain weaknesses in the latter.

The part of the Roman Empire, including Jerusalem had been captured by the Iranians. At that time, completely against the prevailing trend, the Quran predicted that within ten years, the Romans would regain supremacy over the Iranians. Roman historians say that immediately thereafter the vanquished king of the Romans, Heraclius, started undergoing a mysterious change, so much so that in the year 623 A.D, he led a retaliatory attack on Iran. In the year 624 A.D., he had recovered all his occupied territories from the Iranians. In this way, the two great Empires, fought and fell owing to clashes – externally and within themselves. A European historian, William Edward Hartpole Lecky has written that Muslims entered the Empires as swiftly as a screw passes through wood infested by termites! This is a defining example of how divine intervention led to the establishment of an ideological empire within thirty years! It is important to explain that a political empire can come into being in hundred years but an ideological empire cannot. Ideological empire can come into being only in the first generation. This is because those who are passed on the mission by the founder himself are passionate and filled with the missionary and visionary spirit to take the mission to the next level. An ideological establishment can come into being in the first generation. In generations that follow, transgression sets in. In case of Prophet Muhammad's mission, an ideological empire was brought into being by the companions (first generation of Muslims) within thirty years. It was the companions who entered into Mecca and Medina and also the Sassanid and Roman Empires. It is extraordinary how this process culminated in the first generation!

During this time another remarkable event took place. For the first time in history, God's Word was preserved in the form of Quran. Prior to that, man had never let that happen. But now, both the Quran and Hadith (the life of Prophet Muhammad, which would serve as a role model for mankind) were preserved to be an eternal guide for man.

These developments commenced a new process in history, which culminated in Western Europe. The groundwork was done within thirty years of Prophetic period and the next leap of expansion took place post-Renaissance. It was during this phase that hidden signs of God-realisation unfolded and were brought to forefront by scientific discoveries.

Gradually, the potential of communication and multimedia technology developed to aid the process of taking the Word of God to mankind. So, on one hand items of realization unfolded and communication technology developed whereas on the other hand, religious persecution came to an end. In 1948, the United Nations passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which declared that everyone will have complete religious freedom to adopt, preach or follow any religion of choice. This declaration was agreed upon by all countries and it ushered in the age of religious freedom. All these developments were a culmination of the process that was initiated by the Prophet and his companions. These were the developments that comprised the Divine or *Rabbani* civilization. Let me bring your attention to some crucial developments that made this possible.

In ancient times when kingship was the prevalent order, freedom had no meaning. Once kingship came to an end and democracy prevailed, it became possible to exercise free will without seeking permission from a king! Unfortunately, Muslims do not understand the importance of democracy. During the recent elections in Pakistan, bombings took place at several places because Muslims view democracy as unIslamic. This view is grossly mistaken because not only is democracy in favour of Islam but for the first time, it created conditions conducive for carrying out dawah work freely, without any hurdles. Similarly, the unprecedented development of tourism as an industry has fostered a never-before-like movement of people from one place to another. This was another way through which God gave a boost to global dawah work. Likewise, the invention of printing press made it possible that we print everything and spread it throughout the globe. In the days of manuscripts it was impossible to create copies in such large numbers and this is the reason why education was so difficult to obtain! Post-printing press, education became common and being intellectually awakened, people became capable of understanding a religion like Islam. All these factors were associated with divine civilization.

The Quran tells us that since ancient times God has sent prophets in succession to every town and every community. However, the contemporaries of the prophets adopted a negative attitude towards them.

They tried to jeopardise the Creation Plan but then God intervened and created situations conducive for the divine civilization to come into being within a short span of time. The process that was initiated with Prophet Muhammad has reached its final phase today - the world has religious freedom, printing press, communication and freedom, the hidden signs of God in nature have been unfolded and provided a rational basis by scientific findings and it has now become possible to present the message of God in a rational and logical manner. This is a part of *Rabbani* civilization.

Referring to the verse quoted in the beginning, it becomes clear that man placed hurdles for thousands of years and tried to jeopardise the Creation Plan. Then God intervened and situations unfolded, one after the other, to bring into being the divine civilization. Profound realisation of this fact fosters conviction on a living God because ushering such a civilization was neither in control of Prophet Muhammad nor Abu Bakr or Umar. It was God alone who brought about such a turn of events in history that the divine civilisation came to being in such a short span of time! The coming to pass of such an event is a living proof of the presence of an All-Powerful God.

It is important to understand that God manages history in a certain way. He does not abolish the freedom of man but manages history while restoring man's freedom. People often get stuck here because they see the world in terms of evil and suffering and fail to understand how it is being managed by God. In order to understand history, you will have to inculcate the wisdom and ability to view the world by ignoring the evil that arises as a result of man's misuse of freedom. Only by doing so, will you be able to appreciate the beauty of history, which is mostly under the veil of evil caused by man. Just as, nature is beautiful but pollution is jeopardizing everything! If pollution is removed, a breathtaking beauty shall unveil before man! Switzerland for instance appears paradisiacal because it is free of pollution! Same is the case with history; it must be viewed keeping aside the instances pertaining to misuse of history by man. Until you do so, you will not be able to realise the beauty of history and the importance of divine civilisation. If you develop this wisdom and realise how history is being managed, you will develop a rock-like belief in God, which will be greater than the greatest achievement and will lead to higher realisation!

I pray that we understand the Creation Plan of God and become entitled for his blessings!

Question- Answers

Q1: What would be referred to as “Quwwat-e-murhiba” in the present-day context, arms or ideology?

A: *Quwwat-e-murhiba* is certainly ideology because arms have no value in the present-day context! When the First World War took place, no one won. It was proved that wars don't help! The same was the case with the Second World War. Both times, the world only saw destruction. This makes clear that though the world has problems but no one can fight and resolve it. Several countries have deadly bombs and fighter plans but they can't use it to solve their problems. Ideology on the other hand, is powerful as it conquers man! The reference I would like to give here is of the time when Abbasid Empire was destroyed, Muslims were in a bad condition and people used to say that it is impossible to defeat Tartars. But the same Tartars submitted to the ideology of Islam. Hitti has written, “*Religion of Muslims conquered where their arms failed!*” Likewise, Sir Arthur Keith has written, “*Egyptians were conquered not by sword but by the Quran!*” Therefore it is established conclusively that ideology alone has the power; arms and wars are futile.

Q2: What is meant by divine civilization – will the entire world adopt Islam or will there be freedom for Islam?

A: Divine civilisation refers to situations that provide freedom to Islam. Thinking that the entire world would come under the fold of Islam is against the Creation Plan of God. Till all men have freedom, neither can Muslim rule be implemented nor will everyone embrace Islam. The real thing is that one person or some people who want to spread the Word of God, lead God-oriented life and foster God-realization, will have complete freedom. Earlier, people did not have opportunity to undertake such endeavours. Divine civilization therefore pertains to opportunity explosion for carrying out dawah work!

Q3: In today's world, does religious persecution exist or religious confusion?

A: Both exist. Religious persecution was driven by regime or kingship, which has come to an end now. Confusion is a personal matter and will remain. One shall have to tear apart the veil and see the truth. According to the Quran, there will always be an element of doubt in this world

Indeed, if We had sent an angel as messenger, We would have made him in the form of a man as well, and would have thus added to their confusion (6:9)

This is because doubt is a part of man's test and it is upto every individual to come out of this element of doubt.

Q4: What is the purpose of the 'Spirit of Islam' - the English magazine?

A: The purpose of this magazine is dawah work, that is, to spread the teachings of Islam to English-speaking population. Urdu Al-Risala can only reach the Urdu-speaking population. Those who can must spread this newsletter. It is published from Bangalore but it won't spread on its own. I got to know that a person from Lucknow has bought an agency of 50 newsletters. Everyone should do what he can to spread it.

Q5: What is meant by 'rational thought'?

A: Before scientific era, Greek logic held sway which was based on syllogisms or speculative arguments. Science unveiled realities and gave a new logic or 'scientific' logic to the world. Scientific logic refers to proffering an argument on the basis of well-known facts. Whereas the discussion before scientific era was speculative, scientific era introduced the concept of arguments based on established facts.

Q6: You say that our real work is 'dawah work' but some say our real work is to establish caliphate. Whom should a common man listen to?

A: A common Muslims should read the Quran. There is no verse in the Quran which implores Muslims to establish caliphate. Whereas Quran is filled with verses pertaining to dawah work. Prophet Muhammad said on the occasion of Final Pilgrimage that all those who are present there should spread the word of God to those who are not.

So, Dawah work is clearly there in Quran and Hadith but nowhere is it ordained that a caliphate must be formed. And it is a big sin to knowingly add something in the Quran.

Q7: You stress on simple lifestyle and avoidance of luxurious lifestyle. Does Islam not allow luxurious lifestyle?

A: Haraam has two types: declared haraam and undeclared haraam. For example things like pork, alcohol are declared haraam. There are some other distractions which we must refrain from. This is not my personal opinion but is validated by the Quran and Hadith. Luxury for example, is undeclared haraam. Simple life allows you to refrain from distraction. Whenever you want luxury, you will be distracted and the time which could have been spent in *tadabbur* and spiritual development, will be lost. When man adopts such a materialistic life, and becomes devoid of spirituality, intellectual developments, he leads a worse-than-animal life!