

Revival of Islam (Tajdeed e deen)

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Introduction

Tajdeed-e-deen is an expression derived from the Hadith and refers to “renewal of religion”. The literal meaning of ‘*tajdeed*’ is “to renew”. As a principle, this concept can be drawn from the Quranic term ‘*ihya*’, which means “to revive”. The verse in the Quran refers to the revival of Earth by the rains after the weather conditions have rendered it dry and barren.

According to the Hadith

Every hundred years, God shall raise a man (*Mujaddid*) who will revive the faith of the people
(Abu Dawud)

The verse in the Quran reads

Remember that God brings the earth back to life after its death. We have made Our signs clear to you, so that you may fully understand (57:16-17)

This verse explains that after the Earth becomes dry and barren, it is restored to life by water. This analogy points at the phenomena of degeneration of communities, which as it happens, requires *revival* or *ihya*. According to a Hadith,

You [Muslims] shall do just as the communities before you did (Al Bukhari)

The Hadith reiterates how degeneration is a universal law and just like it infested all previous communities, it would do so to the later-day Muslims. Here am reminded of the famous words of Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406), who said

Just like an individual has an age, communities too have an age.

In other words, death marks the end of any return in the case of an individual. However, in case of communities, even when degeneration sets in, efforts can be made to revive the community. The case in point is of present-day Muslims who have much deviated from the right course.

Partial revival

It was the failure of the ulema to undertake *tajdeed* and *ihya* extensively that restricted its application. For example, during the British period, it was observed that the Muslims started considering it wrong to marry a widow. In order to revive the original practice, some ulema themselves married a widow. According to a Hadith,

If someone revives a practice of mine which has been lost, then he will get the reward equivalent to hundred shahids

Though a revival, it was only ‘partial’. It therefore did not prove very useful because the revival at community level could not happen through partial endeavours.

Scientific Religion

A British philosopher Bradley (d. 1924) wrote a book entitled, *Appearance and Reality*. This book has a chapter, *Scientific Religion*, where he proffers the idea that man needs a religion, which is scientific, not traditional and is consistent with the norms regarded by modern scientific disciplines.

In my opinion the term '*Scientific religion*' is rather misleading. It would be more correct to call it '*natural religion*'. Man is in need of a religion that conforms to the Creation Plan of God. It is worth mentioning at this juncture that 'science' is not a man-made discipline. It is in reality, another name for discovering the hidden laws of nature. Science therefore merely discovers that which is already present in nature. For example, God created water such that upon being heated to a certain temperature, its molecules evaporate. Science discovered this and innumerable such facts. Science therefore is a phenomenon of discovering that which already existed in the nature made by God.

In the seventh century, superstitions were rampant. In those days, Quran presented a natural religion whose principles were based on the laws of nature. But unfortunately, after the companions of the Prophet, degeneration began to set in and gradually ritualistic practices got a stronghold. *Tajdeed* is therefore the revival of the true face of Islam, which conforms to the requirements of being a natural religion that which Bradley referred to as the scientific religion.

Some illustrative examples

A verse in the Quran says

Who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation (42:38)

The above verse indicates that the affairs between men should be settled through democratic processes. While Islam had introduced democracy in history, the world was under the reins of kingship. In other words, even when the immediate situation was not favourable, God introduced a principle that would be applicable as the world landscape changes.

In the modern world, democracy is a rule. To think about the idea of democracy as far in time as seventh century might not be understandable but for the modern man, it is an idea which is fully understandable. I often hear people mention that the Quran needs to be re-revealed today. This is not correct. It will be appropriate to say that the Quran has to be re-defined today.

According to another verse in the Quran

He has subjected whatever is in heaven and on the earth to you (45:13)

Given the scale of superstition prevalent in the seventh century, this appears to be a unique statement. In his book entitled, '*The Mysterious Universe*', Sir James Jeans (1930) wrote

It seems that man has strayed in this planet Earth, which is not made for him, accidentally.

But recent research has proved that the universe is '*custom made*' to sustain the existence of man. In other words, it means that the whole universe is made to support the requirements of man. The above Quranic verse can now be well explained in the light of modern scientific findings.

Let me take another example to explain how the Quranic teachings conform to the modern, scientific discipline and the laws of nature. Under the influence of Greek philosophers, Muslim philosophers started thinking that creation has been there ever since. This mindset was against the Quranic purview that is conveyed in the following verse

We created the heavens, the earth and everything between them in six days [periods] (50:38)

Big Bang theory suggests that the universe came into being some billions of years ago and that it has not existed since forever. Thus the original teaching of Islam is in accordance with the discoveries of science today.

Despite having introduced such revolutionary ideas to the world, Islam was considered anachronistic. The modern scientific researches however re-affirmed its relevance as the religion that Bradley sought. Today therefore, there exists a grave need to re-apply the Islamic principles in the light of modern discoveries so as to clarify the fact that the religion, which appears irrelevant is *Muslim-made Islam* and not the God-made Islam. *Tajdeed* in other words, is the removal of *Muslim-made Islam* and revival of *God-made Islam*.

Mind based Spirituality

Islam propagates mind-based spirituality (*tazkia*) as against the heart-based spirituality (*tazkia*) propagated by the Sufis. The idea of heart-based spirituality developed under the influence of superstitions and notions that led man to believe that heart is the centre or source of *tazkia* or spirituality. The teachings of the Quran on the contrary exhort man to think and reflect. A verse in the Quran reads

Why did you not then understand? (36:62)

The Quran therefore urges man to contemplate and reflect on its teachings in order to attain *tazkia*. For thousands of years, man thought that heart was the centre of spirituality but the modern scientific findings dispelled this notion as they proved heart to be nothing more than a blood-pumping organ. Unfortunately, the present-day Muslims have not yet realised the importance of mind-based spirituality in Islam. According to a Hadith,

Of all the things that God created, mind is the most valuable (Al-Mughni, 13483)

Scientific findings suggest that both emotions and thinking are a function of human mind. This is in exact accordance with the teachings of Islam, but Muslims became so influenced by the prevailing superstitions that they gradually developed a deep notion about heart being the source of spirituality.

Iheya (Revival)

Iheya does not suggest a revision in the religion but it pertains to revival of its original teachings. A book entitled *Modern Approach to Islam* talks about the need to revise and reform Islam. When I read it, I realised that the need was actually to abandon the *man-made Islam* and revive the *God-revealed Islam* so as to unveil the true face of Islam.

Reason based argument

I read a book entitled, '*Age of Reason*.' In earlier times, arguments were conjecture-based but in the present world, arguments can only be based on reason and fact. The acclaimed British philosopher Bertrand Russell quotes the example of the Greek philosopher Aristotle to illustrate the conjecture-based thinking that prevailed in olden days. He writes that women were always given a secondary status in the writings of Aristotle. His argument was that nature itself has accorded secondary status to man, which he said was proved by the lesser number of teeth they possessed in comparison to man. Russell further writes that Aristotle had married more than once and he could have easily verified the veracity of his conjecture by counting the number of teeth in his wife's mouth. Doing so would have made clear to him the falsity of his premiss.

Similarly, the present-day Muslims lack reason-based argument whereas the Quran gives chief importance to reason and rationality. For a long time in history, lack of reasoning allowed syllogisms to survive as arguments. For example, in his book, *as-Sarim al-Maslul 'ala Shatim ar-Rasul* (The Drawn Sword against those who insult the Messenger), Ibn Taymiyyah, wrote that anyone who insults the Prophet Muhammad should be killed. It is ironic to note that even a person of Ibn Taymiyyah's repute could not provide a single rational argument in favour of his dictum.

It is extremely crucial to understand that any law or ruling of jurisprudence must be derived from the Quran or Hadith. Only then is acceptable, otherwise it is a subjective statement. In case of the above book, Ibn Taymiyyah cites only one reference from a Hadith, the authenticity of which he himself doubts. How can then, basis a doubtful Hadith, such a dictum can be ordained?

Moreover, the alim unanimously opine that if Ibn Taimiyyah does not know a Hadith, then that Hadith does not exist. The Quran says,

Produce your evidence if you are telling the truth (2:111)

The above verse is in complete conformity with scientific principles of basing an argument on facts and figures. Even though, Islam introduced the principles of rational argument, because of lack of precedent and dominance of superstitious culture, Muslims began following the prevalent way of arguing. For hundreds of years, books that were published used the unscientific method of arguing. As a result, the Muslim literature became greatly influenced. When the need for scientific religion was realised, Bradley and others like him could not see the real Islam, which is in agreement with science and nature.

Peaceful activism

Stressing the importance of peaceful activism in life, the Quran says,

Reconciliation is the best (4:128)

This means that peaceful activism is the best activism. Muslims on the contrary, are engaged in violence and armed struggle (*musallah jihad*). The reason for this is the degeneration that crept into the original teachings and conditioned the Muslim mindset. Despite their being a practical demonstration by the Prophet Muhammad at the time of the Hudaibiyya Peace Treaty, the present-day Muslims continue to persist in their wrongdoings in the name of Islam.

Today, in various parts of the world, Muslims are engaged in gun and bomb culture because they could not detach themselves from their immediate situation and think of solutions to address the issue. Unless they do so, they will not be able to understand the importance of peace-based activism, which ensures that efforts of man are channelised into developmental tasks rather than into self-destruction.

Conclusion

Islam subscribes to mind-based spirituality or *tazkia* that focuses on re-engineering of mind. Muslims must give up the concept of heart-based spirituality that has held them in its grip. For example, Shah Waliullah's father was a sufi saint. As a teenager, Shah once went to a garden and returned very late. His father scolded him saying that instead of wasting his time in the garden, he should have done chanting (*muraqba*). This was because his father did not know the importance of reflection and contemplation. He held that closing the eyes and shutting oneself in a room was the way to becoming spiritual.

Sitting in my balcony once, I became overwhelmed with the world around me. As I began thinking, I realised that the Earth had a complete system for ensuring the survival of man. The trees could absorb carbon dioxide and produce oxygen. Man inhales this oxygen produced by trees and exhales carbon dioxide. Thinking about the mechanics of this process and its functioning, leads to thrilling *tazkia*. This is because *tazkia* takes place when man thinks about the importance of each and every particle in the universe. Islamic *tazkia* is therefore, based on contemplation, reflection and activation of our thinking processes.