

Roza: a spiritual jihad

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Introduction

I was not being able to understand the topic for today but as I was climbing up the stairs to reach here, I met Sajid Anwar Sb on my way and I said to him: *You are a spiritual mujahid*. He stays at Roorkee, which is 200kms away from Delhi and comes every Sunday by road. It takes him 4 hours and he is regular with it. He did not miss the talk even during the Ramzaan. As I thought about it, I realized that in order to come on time, every Sunday, he must actually be doing *Idlaaj* (*literally means, to travel at night*) by beginning his preparation from one evening before. This is an example of spiritual *jihad*. People wrongfully become militant *mujahid* while on the contrary, a believer follows spiritual *jihad*.

According to the Quran

Believers, fasting has been prescribed for you, just as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard yourselves against evil (2:183)

The month of Ramzaan aims at developing a believer so that he becomes a spiritual *mujahid*. Such a person undertakes *jihad* with his self – with his mind, his thinking, and his habits. People equate fighting with *jihad* but according to a Hadith

**He who fights with his conscience for the sake of God is the real mujahid
[Mujahid who hai jo apni nafs se lade, allah ki khatir (Musnad Ahmad)]**

Ramzaan is training in spiritual *jihad* so that man inculcates non-material thinking and can lead life according to spiritual values.

Leading a need-based life

Inculcating such spiritual *jihad* has deep wisdom as it teaches man to lead a need-based life. There are three levels of leading life – *need*, *comfort* and *luxury*. Abstaining from food and water is symbolic of reducing all material comforts and luxuries in life, to ensure that one leads life without being distracted.

In the backdrop of the upheaval prevalent in the world these days (Gulf countries, Britain and even India), an international magazine approached me to write an article explaining this unrest in the light of religious wisdom. After analysis, I concluded that the key reason for this surge of protests is dissatisfaction. People do not want to settle on what they have and seek more and more. None of the protestors is dying of hunger; yet they consider their present provisions as inadequate.

Be it the ouster of the British or any other later-day protest, all arose from dissatisfaction; because anything that man gets, loses significance. Roza is a training to agree with less because it is in agreeing with less that man will find satisfaction.

Man: ideal seeking animal

Man is an ideal-seeking animal and he wants everything to be ideal – world, justice, society and government. But in the present world of God, none of them is meant to be ideal.

We have created man into a life of toil and trial. (90:4)

The ideal in the mind of man is for paradise, not for this world. In reality therefore, man is a paradise-seeking animal. This nature of man makes him seek paradise in this world itself and since everything in this world is less than ideal, it makes him dissatisfied.

The only solution to this problem, I wrote is, contentment (*qanaat*). In other words, man should adopt *material status quoism* and *spiritual idealism*. While being an idealist in the way of attaining spiritual development, man must remain a status quoist for material matters. This is the training that the month of Ramzaan imparts. Man must agree with what he has since he will not achieve ideal in this world. Quran says

Greed for more and more distracted you [from God] till you reached the grave. (102:1-2)

Throughout history, tension, extremism, fighting, has taken place due to dissatisfaction. For instance, Alexander the Great, the King of Greece was not satisfied within the borders of his kingdom. He wanted to conquer the entire Europe. He advanced and eventually reached Asia till the Indian Ocean and then died. Despite having a kingdom from Greece till Sind, Alexander died in frustration.

It is therefore important for man to understand that he cannot create his own paradise in the present world; paradise will be in the hereafter only. Seeking it here would only yield dissatisfaction. Contentment therefore is the key to ensure that man leads a peaceful life. Because each time a change is implemented, it becomes a source of dissatisfaction for the next set of protestors and this vicious cycle goes on. Unfortunately, even those who fast do not understand this reality. A Persian poet's couplet reads

*Tan parvariye khalq, fuzun shudd za riyazat
Juz garmiye iftaar, nadarad ramzaan heich*

*Roze main aur zyada khane peene ki dhoom mach gayi. Roza is liye tha ki log kam par raazi hon
[During Ramzaan, people started indulging in elaborate food arrangements,
even though fasting was so that they learn to remain contented on less.]*

I recall an instance here. Once, I was in America during Ramzaan. During my discussion with a gathering of people, I mentioned about the extravagant eating habits of people during Ramzaan. An American Muslim countered me and said it was not so in America. Then, a senior person stood up and said that the young person was not correct in his assessment and same was the case in America. He suggested a simple litmus test: weigh those who fast before the month begins and weigh them after the month ends, there would be a positive difference.

Why does man seek paradise?

God created man and inhabited him in paradise. Man could however not control his temptation and as a result of his indulgence, he was casted out of paradise. God ordained that man must now spend a part of his life on Earth and basis his deeds, he will be casted into either Hell or Paradise in the life hereafter. The concept of Paradise therefore is embedded in the mind of man. In the present world, man has to build the personality which will become worthy of being inhabited in Paradise. But instead of preparing themselves, people want to establish their paradise in this world itself.

Man lives and dies in the frustration of not being able to create a paradise in this world. What he fails to understand is that in the present world, God has not kept those circumstances, which will enable the creation of paradise. While man's mind seeks ideal, this world is less-than-ideal. This in fact, is the biggest wisdom that allows man to lead life with a realistic approach.

Ramzaan teaches the wisdom of contentment. It trains man to avoid distraction and control the psyche of wanting more and more (*takassur*), thereby ensuring that he leads a tension free and peaceful life.

Aetakaaf (Seclusion)

Aetakaaf is the practice of contemplating in the last ten days of Ramzaan by keeping oneself away from all distractions and to spend time concentrating and reading the Quran.

He practices seclusion from sins

[Woh zunoob gunaaah se aetakaaf karta hai] (Ibn Maja)

“*Gunaah*” here does not mean that the person earlier drank wine or committed other sins and refrains from doing so while he is *aetakaaf*. It means that the believer performs *aetakaaf* (seclusion) from distraction. Multiple kinds of distraction exist in the world but when a believer comes to the mosque and concentrates, he is able to think and contemplate on bigger realities of life and existence.

A verse in the Quran states

**The month of Ramazan is the month when the Quran was sent down as guidance for mankind.
(2:185)**

Ramzaan, being the month of contemplation encourages man to think about the Creation Plan of God, how to make life tension free and the purpose of life. Both *aetakaaf* and *Ramzaan* are not mysterious; they are meant for contemplation. Only when you concentrate and think can you realize deeper meanings. Thinking therefore is the biggest worship.

According to a tradition, when a companion named *Abu Darda* passed away, another companion visited his house and asked his wife, *Umme Darda* to tell about the way *Abu Darda* worshipped. She said,

“He used to keep thinking!” (Hayatus Sahaba)

In this context, I also subscribe to Mr. Pramod Batra’s formula: *Think, think, think; there must be a better way*. This is the real purpose of *aetakaaf*.

Ramzaan is for training

The training imparted in Ramzaan is to “*agree on less*.” It aims at inculcating realistic thinking and learning to agree on what is possible in this world. Exercising contentment teaches man to accept what is possible. Those who do not know this wisdom live in tension and frustration.

Quran has been revealed to make man aware about the Creation Plan of God. God created man as a seeker of paradise. But man must not strive to bring to fruition the search for paradise, in this world itself. The present world is so that man performs actions that would make him eligible for paradise in the world hereafter. Knowing this is akin to knowing the secret of life.

Strangely, mankind has remained unaware of this wisdom. The discontentment in our world is an outcome of erroneous thinking, which has two broad aspects. One pertains to not being contented with what we have been given and the other pertains to not knowing that the present world is not where man's aspirations will come to pass. This world is action-ground and the hereafter is where man will receive the reward for the actions he performed in this world. I have read Quran all my life and have read books other than Quran as well. I have discovered this as the conclusive secret of life.

Dawah work

Dawah work is not a political, or community work. It is to make man aware of the Creation Plan of God. The biggest well-wishing for mankind is to tell this secret of life so that people are able to ward off their unnecessary problems and tensions. *Dawat – e- lillah* means “calling people to God”, calling them to lead a God-oriented life as per the Creation Plan of God.

It must be noted that nothing is mysterious in Islam, everything is well-defined. According to a Hadith, the Prophet Muhammad said

I have been sent with a religion, whose nights are as clear as the day
[Main ek aise deen ko le kar bheja gaya hun, jiski raatein dinon ki tarah roshan hain
(Musnad Ahmad)]

Such realization comes through contemplation and thinking; Quran therefore stresses on *Tadabbur* and *Tafakkur*. It is also important to understand that unlike other books written by men, Quran does not provide details of everything. Half the thing has been told and for the other half, the reader is invited to think and understand. Books authored by men provide complete details and specifications but Quran is different. For example, Quran ordains namaaz but does not give details of the five time prayers. This principle in itself, invites one to think. I say therefore, that Quran is the Book of Contemplation.

I want that CPS team to understand the Creation Plan of God themselves and spread to all others. This will be the biggest act of well-wishing for mankind. Street-activism does not lead to any result. I have seen the politics of crowd many times in my life, but have never seen it yield any result. This is because in such scenarios, people are emotionally charged and stand with slogans without giving deep thought. In a world, where politics of crowd is rampant, responsibility of the CPS team increases manifold so we must realize it and discharge it.

The present-day man lacks most of all, an understanding of the ideology of life. He has everything, apparently, but does not know what the right way of thinking is. Because God has unfolded the Truth before you, you must thank Him and make people aware about it. One form of it is that you distribute Quran. He who reads the Quran will get to know the Truth. Spreading Quran is like spreading the message of God.

The CPS team members can follow any of the two courses in life: *one man, one mission* and *one man, two missions*. Former is when you only strive for dawah work and there is no other purpose in your life. In the latter approach, you dedicate 50 percent of your time to your family, yourself and the remaining is dedicated for dawah work. There is no third approach. According to the Quran

Some keep half-way; (*Muqtasid, 1:2 mission*) (35:32)

Some, by God's leave, excel others in good deeds (*Sabiq, 1:1 mission*) (35:32)

A person told me that a lot of dawah work is happening throughout India and the world, but very little is happening here in Delhi. I want the CPS team to think about this because Delhi is the centre. If less work happens at the Centre, what effect will it have elsewhere? This image must be shed and all conceivable methods to do dawah work should be employed. It is obligatory upon every man of faith, just like namaz and roza is.

Quran says

God does not charge a soul with more than it can bear (2:286)

Responsibility is proportionate to *istitaat*. When after death, we present ourselves before God, we must not be guilty of having worked less despite all the opportunities. There is no material benefit or political benefit in doing dawah work; it is done only for the hereafter.

This should be our goal in life so that we do not remain devoid of divine blessings in the hereafter. Every person is responsible for himself. According to Quran

No burden-bearer shall bear another's burden (35:18)

I pray that God gives us the ability to see things rightly and lead lives so that when we reach after death, we don't have to feel ashamed. God may give us a place in His paradise. According to a Hadith

Life is that which will be found in the hereafter

Zindagi wohi hai, jo aakhirat mein mile (Al Bukhari)