

Ijtihaadi or Creative solution

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Excerpt:

In his talk, the Maulana explains the importance that Islam lays on Ijtihaad.

Ijtihaad or creative thinking refers to discovering a new and more workable solution to a problem. Through examples of various Prophets, the Maulana conveys the outcome of practising Ijtihaad in different situations. The fact that change is the only constant ensures that man is amidst new challenges, all the time. If one ties oneself to a certain approach only, stagnation would set in and he would fall in a blind alley. That is why a creative solution is required so that the problem can be handled better. Creative solution is carried out keeping the future in mind.

Unfortunately, the present-day Muslims are not able to understand the wisdom of creative thinking owing to lack of Ijtihaadi spirit. Quran implores a believer to not react to a situation and strive to maintain peace. It is obligatory on a dayee to make utmost efforts to make sure that peace is not compromised.

Lesson:

Ijtihaad is the secular name of creative solution - a solution that offers a fresh perspective to a challenging problem. We know that life is another name of turmoil and problems are a part of the creation plan of God. So, when a situation changes, Ijtihaad encourages us to develop a re-defined ideology to respond to the change, better.

Introduction

Islam lays immense stress on *Ijtihad*. Unfortunately the larger populace considers it as a mysterious phenomenon. In reality, *Ijtihad* is the secular name of creative solution - a solution that offers a fresh perspective to a challenging problem.

Life is another name of turmoil and problems are a part of life. No conspirator creates problems but problem is a part of the creation plan of God. When a problem strikes, man should undertake *Ijtihad*, that is, exert one's utmost. In other words, when situation changes *Ijtihad* encourages us to develop a re-defined ideology.

Examples of Ijtihad

Let me cite an example to illustrate the importance of *Ijtihad*. Throughout Maharashtra, *Ganesh Chaturthi* is celebrated with much fanfare. Towards the end of the festivities, a procession is taken through the streets to immerse the idol into a river or the sea. On an occasion, the day of *Ganesh Chaturthi* procession coincided with the day of *Milad-un-nabi* procession. It was nearly certain that the two communities would get into a conflict and bloodshed would follow. Some wise Muslims gathered in a mosque, some of them were Al Risala readers, and after rounds of deliberation they decided that they will change the date of *Milad-un-nabi*'s procession. It was this prudent decision that averted the imminent clash. This was a creative solution.

Let me take another example. The tall trees in front of the balcony of my house give support to some cable wires. One day, I saw two squirrels hurriedly running on a wire, opposite to one another and heading for a clash! To my surprise, just as they came close to colliding with one another, one of them sprung under the wire and made way for the other one to pass. Avoiding confrontation is the law of nature and all animals follow this dictum. While animals do so instinctively (*jibillat*) man is controlled by mind and accomplishes a task after reasoning it out. In the above mentioned instance, Muslims thought and applied a creative solution.

When a community loses the ability to undertake *Ijtihad*, then nothing else can help them. This is because problems would never be eliminated and if one does not think creatively, emerging out of failures and losses becomes forever more difficult. For example, entire Muslim world has involved itself in Palestine - Arab world directly and the rest of the Muslim world, indirectly. Despite huge resources being spent, no result could be obtained. Muslims suffered losses because they could not discover a creative or *Ijtihadi* solution in this regard.

The importance of *Ijtihad* is such that according to a Hadith

*Tum Ijtihad karo - agar tumhara Ijtihad theek hai toh tumhe do sawaab milega aur agar tumne
galti kar di toh tumhe ek sawaab milega. (Al Bukhari)*

*(If one does Ijtihad and makes a mistake, he will have one reward and if he does it correctly he will
get double reward.)*

Prophet Muhammad encouraged *Ijtihad* so that life does not fall into a blind alley. *Ijtihad* or creative solution has always been a part of the Plan of God. Let me explain through certain examples.

Prophetic Examples

Prophet Job (*Ayyub*) was an Israelite prophet probably sometime in the ninth century, B.C who was born at a place in Eastern Arabia. On an occasion, during the ailment of Prophet Job, he became quite angry with his wife and took an oath to strike her hundred times with a stick. When he regained his health, he did not find it appropriate to hit his wife and then God told him a creative solution.

*“We said to Him, “Take a handful of twigs in your hand and strike with that but do not break your
oath.” (Quran, 38:44)*

After *Hijrat* (migration) of Prophet Muhammad to Medina, a group of companions was sent to a tribe, *Banu Qurayza* that inhabited a place close to Medina. While the group was departing, Prophet Muhammad gave the companions an advice, which is alluded to in the Hadith as follows

*Tum mein se koi shaqs hargiz asr ki namaz na pade jab tak ki woh pohunch jaye Banu Qurayza ki
basti mein (Al Bukhari)*

(No one of you should pray Asr until you reach the village of Banu Qurayzah)

While the group was on its way, the time of *Asr* came. Some companions said we should not pray until we reach *Banu Qurayzah*. Others said we should pray *Asr* now because the Prophet did not mean for us to miss the *Asr* prayer, but he wanted us to be in a hurry. So some of the companions prayed *Asr*, while others continued on until they reached *Banu Qurayzah* after sunset. This example demonstrates how a creative solution is arrived at because it was not a matter of transgressing the instruction of Prophet but a matter of re-defining what Prophet had instructed the group to do.

These examples of *Ijtihad* teach man an important lesson. Being the only constant, change constantly throws new challenges at man. If one ties oneself to a certain approach only, stagnation would set in and he would fall in a blind alley. That is why a creative solution needs to be determined so that the problem can be handled better.

Prophet Muhammad began dawah work in Mecca in 610 A.D. At that time, Mecca was dominated by polytheists and no one enjoyed religious freedom. Angered by his initiatives, the Meccans became stringent opponents of Prophet and his companions and started persecuting them. The tribal parliament (Darun Nadwa) unanimously decided that both Prophet Muhammad and his Companions should either leave Mecca or be killed. Umar wanted to fight them but Prophet said,

Ya Umar! Ham thode hain (Ibn Hisham)

(O Umar! We are a handful)

Prophet dissuaded Umar from confronting because it would not have been prudent to engage in violence. Instead of reacting, Prophet Muhammad planned afresh. He changed his workplace and migrated to Medina. His mission remained the same but he changed the workplace from a place where confrontation was anticipated to a place where opportunities existed.

Despite Prophet Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Medina, the Meccan leaders, still not content, kept launching offensives against him. Armed hostilities ensued, at events such as the Battles of Badr, Battle of Hunayn and Battle of Uhud. As a result, Prophet Muhammad's mission suffered severe setbacks.

The mission of Prophet Muhammad required peaceful conditions because during tense situations of wars and skirmishes, people would become narrow-minded and closed to interaction. The Prophet, wanting to normalise the situation, initiated peace talks with the opposite party at Hudaibiyyah, a city ten miles away from Mecca. These negotiations lasted two weeks.

As a principle, the side which considers itself in a better position would not be ready to subdue and agree. Prophet Muhammad wanted a peace agreement with Quraysh tribe so that the two sides do not fight with each other. So, when the Quraysh said that peace agreement will take place only when unilateral conditions of the Quraysh are met, Prophet Muhammad agreed.

In doing so, Prophet postponed the Umrah that they had arrived for, he struck the word Prophet, returned Abu Jundal who had come to them for rescue, all chained up and accepted all conditions unilaterally only so that a peace agreement can be brought into being. Peace agreement was actually the normalization of situation because only in normal circumstances does dawah work take place. The Prophet of Islam provides a very clear historical example of this in his method of negotiating of the Hdaybiyyah peace treaty by unilaterally accepting all the conditions of his opponents. When the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah was concluded, the following verse was revealed in the Quran

Truly, We have granted you a clear victory (Quran, 48:1)

Companions were very apprehensive and said that this is a humiliating defeat and not a victory. Prophet and God called it victory because Prophet saw it in terms of result. At that moment it did not seem like a victory but in terms of result, it was! This is the example of creative solution, which teaches us to consider the future outcome and not only the present.

The Prophet, while not receiving justice or his rights, gained a 10-year no-war pact. This gave him and his companions an opportunity to work uninterruptedly on a constructive programme. When interaction began after the Treaty, Islam addressed the nature of people. At the time of Treaty, this aspect was hidden that once open interaction begins, Islam will address minds and they will surrender. Therefore, in two years times people entered the fold of Islam in big numbers and soon, entire Arabia was islamised. This was the miracle of creative solution.

Creative solution is carried out keeping the future in mind. It is not present-based but because people stay stuck in present, they are not able to understand this wisdom. The above examples clearly portray wise decision-making, beneficial for both religion and dawah work: first changing workplace and then striving to bring peace at all costs, even by unilaterally accepting conditions of the other party.

Let me cite another example. When after the fourth Caliph Ali ibn Ali Talib, political conflict ensued between Abdullah ibn Zubayr and the Umayyads, Abdullah ibn Umar, one of the senior-most companions of the Prophet, held himself aloof from the battle. People approached him and, quoting the verse of *qital-al-fitna*, asked him why he was not joining in the battle.

Fight them until there is no more [religious] persecution (Quran, 8:39)

Abdullah ibn Umar replied that *'fitna'* as mentioned in the Quran did not refer to political infighting, but rather to the religious coercive system, that had already been an end to by them. (Fathul Bari)

From this, it becomes clear that war against war against *fitna* was a war of limited duration, temporary in nature, meant to be engaged in only until its specific purpose had been served. Those who were fighting then were re-creating it. The real *fitna* was religious persecution and absence of freedom to propagate the word of God, which was over and no one was prevented from offering the *namaz*, spreading the word of God. What they were indulging in was self-styled *fitna*. Abdullah ibn Umar therefore redefined the verse of the Quran.

Muslims fail to discover re-application

Recently, a film was made in America, "Innocence of Muslims" where Prophet Muhammad has been presented in an objectionable way. One of its part (~ 12 minutes) was loaded online. Muslims worldwide started protesting against it. They killed the American ambassador and ushered uprisings everywhere. Slogans like "Obama, Obama, we like Osama" were raised but to no positive effect. This was because instead of discovering a creative solution to this problem, Muslims succumbed to reaction. This is not the first instance, be it the Danish cartoon, Salman Rushdie's book or the act of putting a copy of the Quran to fire – all these incidents have incited similar reactions from Muslims. This is because present-day Muslims do not have the ability to discover creative solutions to tackle such cases.

When 'Satanic Verses' was published, I visited America and met a man who told me that he visited a bookstore in Chicago. Out of curiosity, he asked the book-seller about the count of sale of Satanic Verses. I was surprised to know that only 3 copies were sold. He then asked about the number of copies of Quran and was told, it was 70! I learnt from this incident that in terms of result, such instances bring about big opportunities. People become curious and they want to know the real story. The curiosity provides us with the opportunity to do dawah work. Because of Muslim reactions, Salman Rushdie became so popular that his book was translated in various languages. Alternatively, in response to the book, if Muslims would have the Quran translated and arranged for its dissemination, it would have been spread in great numbers and Rushdie's book, indirectly, would have become the cause of spreading the Quran. This is creative solution but the problem of present-day Muslims is that they do not know what creative solution is. They only know how to undertake protests and create chaos. Creative thinking refers to discovering a new and more workable solution to the problem. People do not know of this.

The Prophet Muhammad went tirelessly in the quest of knowledge about reality and Truth. God blessed him with this knowledge, which opened his heart to the deep realisation of Truth (*marifah*). Then he started preaching the oneness of God in Makkah, where he had to face stiff opposition, but it was thanks to this opposition, that he became known throughout the country. This is alluded to in the following verse of the Quran

Have We not given you high renown? (94:4)

Neither did Prophet or his companions protest, nor did they react. People became increasingly becoming curious to know about his mission. God converted negativity into positivity. This was creative solution. It must be understood that it is not in man's limit to eliminate problems.

Muslims worldwide did propaganda against Salman Rushdie but did anything happen? Did anything happen against the Danish cartoons? Now they are raising voice against this video – nothing will happen. A big mistake is that people think it is the result of some conspiracy. It is not so. It is only the phenomenon of misuse of freedom and freedom has been provided by God. Freedom is there in the Creation Plan of God. Stalin, Hitler and all those who cause bloodshed and violence depict a case of misuse of freedom. This has always happened. Even Prophet Adam misused his freedom. Because no one can abolish God-given freedom, no one can abolish this phenomenon of misuse. All this will keep happening till doom strikes. Only God can abolish man's freedom and till doom strikes God will let freedom continue. When no one can finish this freedom, no one can finish its misuse. Therefore, you have to learn the art of management. Trying to eliminate the problem is futile. You should work on determining a creative solution and this is *Ijtihad*.

The so-called problems of Muslims in present times are not problems but example of failure of Muslims to tackle a situation. It is critical to realise that we live in a world that was not created by us but by God Almighty. So, we have to know what the Creation Plan of God is. Without knowing the Creation Plan, we cannot deal with problems. As a part of this Plan, God has given complete freedom to man because man is on test in this world. Just as during exams, student has complete freedom for three hours. If in a history exam, he write about literature or writes nothing, he cannot be stopped. He can write anything and management cannot stop him from doing so because he is free to write for those three hours.

Muslims wrongfully consider a problem as a conspiracy; it is not a conspiracy but a case of misuse of freedom. Let me illustrate this with the help of an instance that took place in the 13th century A.D. A Christian named, *As-Saaf* made disrespectful remarks about the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims protested and sought capital punishment for him. In response to this incident, *Imam Ibn Taymiyyah* wrote a book, “*as-Sarim al-Maslul ‘ala Shatim ar-Rasul*” (*The Drawn Sword against those who insult the Messenger*). In the book, *Ibn Taymiyyah* recommended that whoever disrespects the Prophet must be killed. Several other thinkers also wrote books to discuss this issue. But the question is did the disrespect come to an end? It has in fact increased much more than what it was. Then, what was the use of writing such a book? Instead, these thinkers should have authored a book highlighting that any such instance when someone disrespects the Prophet Muhammad, is actually a dawah opportunity. You can meet such a person and talk to him. Nowhere does the Quran corroborate this concept of killing in the event of disrespect (*shatm*). This concept of killing upon blasphemy was a Christian concept. Those who entered Islam from Christianity brought it along and Muslims ended up islamising it. Quran on the contrarily states

Do not revile those {beings} whom they invoke instead of God, lest they, in their hostility, revile God out of ignorance. (Quran, 6:108)

A believer has been asked to refrain from responding to the obduracy of his addressee with abusive outbursts, lest they be provoked. No where does the Quran cite that whoever disrespects the Prophet should be killed. Even if you read the entire Quran, you will not find any such commandment. Those who subscribe to the view of killing those who disrespect (*shatm*) go against the commandment of the Quran and follow a self-styled religion. They will neither benefit in this world nor in the next.

Quran instead imparts wisdom in saying that Muslims should not provoke others. Because if they do not provoke, situation will remain normal and conducive to do dawah work. It is law of nature that if you do not provoke, normal situation remains. Muslims have discovered that which is not in the Quran and are unaware of what is clearly written in the Quran. Islam gives a lot of importance to normalcy, peace and constructive atmosphere, conducive to spread the message of God. Till the last mile therefore, a dayee must strive to avoid any provocative situations. Owing to lack of *Ijtihaadi* spirit, Muslims are not able to understand this wisdom!

I pray that God gives us the ability to recognize truth and we learn to appreciate the importance of peaceful atmosphere and normalcy in the society so that dawah work continues unhindered.

Question - Answers

Q1: What is the criterion for deeni gairat and deeni haamiat?

A: These phrases are baseless. All these phrases like *deeni gairat and deeni haamiat* are sentimental phrases. The yardstick for a believer is the Quran. In order to cite a *Shariah* order, references from Quran and Hadith will have to be cited. If Muslims get offended, they would have to manage it. Saying that a particular thing has hurt sentiments is no proof that it is corroborated by the Quran.

Q2: What is taleef-e-qalb?

A: *Taleef-e-qalb* refers to ‘softening the heart’. This is a law of nature and is practised in every sphere of life, for example, you speak softly and deal respectfully. A person told me that he was travelling in the bus and reading, “*Insaan apne aap ko pehchaan.*” A non-Muslim was sitting next to him and felt attracted to the name and asked if he could buy the book. This Muslim said, ‘*I would gift it to you.*’ *Taleef-e-qalb* is therefore not mysterious but depends on the situation.

If you got to say a temple or gurudwara and refuse *parshaad*, it would be against *taleef e qalb*. You must take it and be grateful. *Taleef-e-qalb* does not have a procedure, it only pertains to creating a normal situation with the *madu* so that your interaction with him is in a *madu*-friendly situation .

Q3: A lot of times we are invited to gatherings where alcohol is served. Should we attend such parties?

A: My view is that in-principle attending such parties is a sheer waste of time but if you are a dayee then attending such events may be beneficial. You may carry books on Islam and Quran with you and there can be an opportunity for you to initiate a conversation. The real point is not going to the party but how can you avail the gathering as an audience (*madu*). Prophet Muhammad used to go on every occasion – be it idol worship or tribal rituals or marketplace because he used to view them as *madu*. It depends on you whether you can avail the event as an opportunity or not. Your decision should be based on whether alcohol is being served or not – that is not your concern.

Q4: What factors inhibit the development of creative thinking in man?

A: Creative thinking is another name for natural thinking. If you save yourself from distraction, it leads to unfolding of nature. Creative thinking cannot be imported, it is already in nature but people owing to their conditioning, succumb to negative thinking and get involved in violence, revenge and hatred and as a result their nature does not unfold.

The only condition is that you save yourself from occurrences, which do not allow nature to unfold. This is the price to allow the development of creative thinking.

Q5: What can be a creative solution to Indian riots? How can it be prevented?

A: Indian riots are not riots in the real sense; it is actually the price that Muslims pay for their unwise policies. Let me explain this. A companion said

Jo aadmi nadaan ke chotte shar ko bardaasht nahin karega toh usko nadaan ke bade shar ko bardaasht karna padega. (He who does not bear patiently the smaller evil of a naive person, will have to then bear the bigger evil of a naive person).

This means that life is full of small problems, which must be patiently borne. Why react on them? Caliph Umar said

Akalmand who nahin hai jo khair aur shar ko jaane balki akalmand who hai jo ye jaane ki do shar mein se kam tar shar kaun sa hai. (Wise is not one who knows good and bad. A wise person is one who knows which is lesser evil of the two.)

This means that choice in life is not between good or bad – it is between lesser evil and greater evil.

Communal riots are incited mainly when Muslims want to change the course of a procession or resist the playing of loudspeaker in an area or undertake similar provocative activities. When police resists, they stone the police. This changes the situation for worse and the case which was hitherto procession versus police now becomes Muslims versus police. Recently in Uttar Pradesh, Muslims gathered at a mosque to break the fast. From a nearby temple they could hear the sound of devotional songs being played so some Muslims went to the temple to tell them to stop playing the songs. When those at the temple refused, it ignited a clash which increased so much that a curfew was imposed. This was not a communal riot; it was the outcome of an unwise act. India is a free country for all of us. The only option is that Muslims adopt the principle of avoidance. Once a big riot broke out in Bhagalpur, Bihar and Muslims suffered greatly. A person wrote a book, “*Bhagalpur ka fasaad*,” (The Riot of Bahagalpur) which he got for me. Explaining the situation, he had written that the procession came to a Muslim area and Muslims took a “step” after which riots broke out. I asked him what this “step” was but he did not tell me. I later met the lawyer who was fighting the case and he told me that Muslims were insistent on the fact that route be changed and when it did not happen, they threw a hand grenade at the procession. There was smoke all around and it led to reactions and bloodshed.

One is that the Muslims took the *step* and second was that they tried to hide it. I later met the author again and asked him why had the Muslims grown so angry? He said because, in the procession, they were raising the slogan, “*Jai Maa Kaali, Tataarpur karo khaali*”. I asked him that the reaction of Muslims ensued massive riots that led to curfew and bloodshed but are Muslims continuing to live in *Tataarpur*? He boastfully said they were. I told him that even after all this when Muslims are continuing to live there, why did Muslims react in the first place? They should have simply ignored the slogan as an unwise attempt to incite anger. (This instance has been further elaborated in my book, “*Hal, yahan hai!*”)

Q6: The Times of India wrote, "Had Muslims not reacted violently, very few people would have watched the film. Not only has it increased the curiosity of people but now Youtube plans to put the complete video online." Please share your thoughts about this situation.

A: This is absolutely correct. The theme of the video is so absurd that no rational mind can withstand it. It is the Muslim hue and cry which has made it popular. Same was the case with Satanic Verses which became famous because of Muslims. Otherwise anyone who reads that book or watches that video would be convinced of its absurdity let alone derive any influence from it.

Q7: One of my students said that after completing his studies he would join Jihad. I asked him the reason and he said, "Our brothers are being killed in Assam. How can we be quiet? We must retaliate."

A: This is because one Muslim leaders are very unwise and second whatever they speak on stage is published in Urdu media. The newspapers do one-sided reporting and never tell the complete story. It is famous that Muslims are being exterminated in Burma. Some of these so-called Muslim leaders of Delhi wrote a letter to Burmese Ambassador saying they want to meet him to discuss the situation. The Burmese Ambassador in reply wrote a letter saying that they do not know the situation in entirety. A Buddhist girl was gang-raped and killed by Muslim boys in Burma. This incident triggered the events that followed.

Unfortunately, Muslim journalism is the worst case of yellow journalism – they do not report the complete story and incite negative emotions. It is the acts of retaliation against Muslim actions, which are labelled as conspiracy and victimization. The student who thinks that Muslims are being victimised does not know the real story. He has only referred to the Muslim media, which does one-sided reporting. If he digs deeper, he will find out that Muslims are not innocent, as depicted in Muslim media.

Q8: How can we avoid emotional thinking and develop objective thinking?

A: In order to develop objective thinking, result must always be considered. The result of emotional approach is always contrary to expectations. Man must use his mind and control his emotions and his thought process must result-oriented and not impulse-driven. Thinking about result would pacify man.

Q9: Some days back, there was news that because Quran was disrespected at a railway platform and the police refused to register an FIR, riots broke out. The situation grew so bad that a curfew had to be imposed and people were killed. How should Muslims handle such situations?

A: First of all, they must fully investigate each and every case. Disrespect never actually happens; it is only an exaggerated rumour. In this case, not even a single person investigated; a rumour was spread and people reacted. It is important to remember that Quran teaches its adherents to not act basis rumours. Let me give an example.

A companion was made the Governor of Yemen and sent to the city. When he reached the border, he saw a large crowd. It instantly struck him that they had gathered there perhaps to kill him. He returned to Prophet and complained to him about it. The Prophet did not act on this; he got it investigated. It was learnt that the crowd had gathered to receive the new Governor and not to kill him.

This example teaches us that it is upon due investigation that the real facts surface. Unfortunately, fear of God no longer exists today. It is because Saudi Arabia has kingship and no freedom, Muslims there are not able to do anything but because India has freedom, Muslims are misusing it.