

The Importance of Dawah Work

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Introduction

This topic came to my mind as I read an article in TOI today (edition September 20, 2009). The news item gave a statement of the President of Pakistan who said that their nation is amidst a great economic turmoil and they need at least 100 billion dollars to resolve the crisis. The news item further elaborated that in the 1980s, the Pakistani leadership took a wrong decision, the result of which they are facing today. This mistaken decision was not explicitly pinpointed in the report. However, anyone who is aware of the history of politics of Pakistan will know the decision that is being referred to. This decision was to initiate a proxy war against India. This was an undeclared war, a form of state-sponsored terrorism that proved very costly for them. Within the next 30 years, Pakistan became bankrupt and the world today sees it as a failed state. The present Pakistan economy rests on continuous funding and assistance from America.

Now the question that arises is that will obtaining the monetary assistance resolve the crisis prevailing in Pakistan? The answer is, No. Pakistan will have to opt for a new starting point. They will have to go back in history and condemn their wrong decision. This acknowledgement of their mistake would provide a new beginning to Pakistan.

Significance of Dawah work

India was a madu nation for Pakistan but they made it an enemy nation and went to the extent of waging a war against their madu. This was a grave error. A verse in the Quran says:

“O Messenger, deliver whatever has been sent down to you by your Lord. If you do not do so, you will not have conveyed His message. God will defend you from mankind” (5:67)

This verse teaches two principles – if you do dawah work, you will get the support of God but if you refrain from doing dawah work, you will not get the support of God. It was incumbent upon Pakistan to consider India as their responsibility (madu) and do dawah work with them. But they failed to do so and therefore Pakistan lost its justification to receive God’s succour. A Hadith also illustrates that:

“Rise and fall depends on Quran.”(Muslim)

This means that if one stands with the Quran, one will be successful, else meet failure. Had Pakistan been benevolent in its dealing with India and considered it as a madu nation, it would have ascended remarkable heights. But Pakistan failed to do so and hence is facing repercussions today.

This is not only the case of Pakistan but all the 57 Muslim countries. All of them are waging futile wars. These wars are broadly of two kinds – those that are being waged with an outside country (like Pakistan waging a proxy war against India) and the others that are fought against one's own government or rulers. The leaders inspire the general masses to revolt. So, everywhere the leaders of the Muslim countries have waged wars in one form or the other.

Goal of a believer

Believers have just one goal – dawah work – to spread the word of God to mankind. If they do this, they would be successful or else they would be doomed to failure.

Today, majority of the Muslim countries are paying the price for their own wrong policies. There are no conspiracies from outside. Neither blaming others, nor seeking monetary assistance from outside will give them a starting point for revision. The starting point is the acceptance that the earlier policies were wrong and to then re-planning the activities on the lines of dawah work. This however is the point where all the Muslims fall into the blind alley. They are not able to extract themselves from the abyss of negative thinking.

Let me take an example to explain how the change in paradigms often works to our advantage. I got a call from a companion, who resides in a village close to Afghanistan border. During the course of our conversation, he told me that due to the ongoing war more than 50 percent Afghans had left their country and migrated to America, Europe, and Pakistan etc. The significance of this movement can be understood from the fact that Afghanistan had always been a closed society, deeply conditioned in their tribal culture. As they moved out of their closed society and were exposed to foreign countries, they saw the educational institutions, the new development avenues and all other landscape changes that have taken place in the world. The compulsive exodus caused them to interact with people of other countries and led to their de-conditioning. They are now returning to their country with a new mindset.

Interaction and Dawah work

Interaction and dawah are inter-related. Interaction paves way for development and is required both in secular and dawah fields. By way of a few illustrations, I shall attempt to explain the wondrous phenomena of interaction.

Illustrations

With the industrialisation of Europe, the new products and developments that emerged filled the Europeans with zeal to foray into foreign lands and showcase their inventions. But as the Europeans ventured into the world outside, an appalling realisation dawned upon them about the underdevelopment that prevailed in the rest of the world. The Europeans were so moved by the idea that they coined the term – white man's burden. The idea was to take upon themselves (Europeans) the responsibility of introducing the modern civilizational developments to the rest of the world. They were extremely overwhelmed by the vast reserves of knowledge and discoveries that they had developed access to and they wanted the rest of the world to partake in this sea of knowledge.

Prophet Muhammad used the same spirit to spread the word of God to man. During his last sermon, he said to his Companions:

“God has sent me for all mankind, so spread my message to all mankind.” (Ibn Hisham)

Traditions recount that upon hearing these words of Prophet Muhammad, the Companions were filled with such fervour that they traversed whichever landscape they could to spread the word of God. For example, upon our visit to Cyprus, I and my Companions saw the grave of a Companion – Grave of a pious lady and were deeply moved by the extent of passion possessed by these Companions as they must have taken up these arduous journeys to reach far and wide (for Cyprus itself they must have travelled from Mecca to Medina, to Damascus through the whole of Africa, into Mediterranean Sea and then to Cyprus). It is for this reason that graves of very few companions exist in Mecca and Medina as most of them forayed into other lands, interacted and spread the message of God. They had gone there as ‘Givers’, not as ‘usurpers or takers’ and were therefore respected all over.

Prime responsibility of present-day believers

Believers today, have relinquished this foremost message of the Quran and hence have been forgotten the responsibility that was entrusted to them by virtue of being a believer. According to a Hadith,

“No house – small or big – shall remain but the word of God shall enter into it.”

(Musnad Ahmad)

As I pondered over this Hadith, it became clear that it is with reference to today's times because when Quran was revealed, the knowledge of geography was very limited hence spreading the message far and wide (since a large part of the world was unknown then) would not have been possible.

It says that God shall enter His word in every house – big or small. This is to say that God will create such circumstances and situations that reaching out to all corners of the world would become a possibility. The present age which has brought about the multimedia revolution, religious tolerance and a scientific bent of mind has changed the intellectual landscape of the world and opened up unlimited avenues for the coming to fruition of this Hadith.

Today's Muslims however continue to stay unaware of the spirit of our times. I had a recent experience of this during my sojourn at Poland. While at a conference there, my companions started spreading the Quran, but some Arabs began objecting to it. Amidst this a Christian came along and encouraged the distribution efforts saying, “Please go ahead, it is a peaceful translation of the Quran.” The Christians said so because he was aware of the spirit of the age, which is to tolerate other religions. They know that in today's world they must be seen as tolerant of other religions. Had they denied the distribution, it would have gone against their image.

We must therefore take cognizance of the new situation that has enveloped the world today and the ample opportunities that have opened up for the coming true of the Hadith stated above. The vast network of communication, a universal language and religious tolerance function in tandem with each other to facilitate dawah work.

Ikhwan-e-Rasool (Brothers of the Prophet)

According to a tradition, the Prophet is recorded to have said,

“In the later times some people will emerge who will be my brothers (Ikhwan-e-rasool).”
(Al-Muslim)

Hence amongst the believers, two historical groups were to emerge. One was that of Companions of the Prophet and the other was that of the Brothers of the Prophet. The former were Prophet's contemporaries who became mukri and spread the truth so they got the title of Ashab-e-rasool (Companions of the Prophet). Traditions also abound in the description of the latter group - Ikhwan-e-rasool. Both the groups would perform dawah work. While Companions did dawah work at the time of Prophet, the Ikhwan-e-rasool would do so in the age of science and multimedia. In other words, those who availed the opportunities in the traditional age and performed dawah work are called Ashab-e-rasool whereas those who will avail the opportunities that unveil in the modern age and perform dawah work would be called the Ikhwan-e-rasool.

Here I would quote a saying of Caliph Umar. He said:

“Those who wish to get the title of Companions should fulfil their condition” (Ibn Kathir)

Similarly those who wish to get the title of Ikhwan-e-rasool should fulfil the conditions of dedicating themselves to availing the dawah opportunities that have opened up in the world of today.

Doomsday is very near

Doomsday is fast approaching; there is no doubt about it. Before it finally strikes, God wants His message to reach all mankind so that on the Day of Judgement, man cannot use 'unawareness' as a plea to escape the wrath of God. Several signs of doomsday as alluded to in Quran and Hadith are manifesting themselves today. For example, a verse in the Quran states:

“We will produce a dabbah from the Earth which will tell them that mankind had no real faith in
Our signs.” (27:82)

As I thought about these signs of God, I realized that the world is filled with the signs of God – some are speaking signs while some others are non-speaking or silent signs. Silent signs existed ever since the world came into inception. Speaking signs manifested themselves in this age of telecommunication despite the very idea of hearing the sound emanating from matter being quite unconceivable till not so long ago.

The three ages

The three ages referred to in this context can be spanned over time periods with reference to how they manifested the signs of God. The first age was of silent signs that were splashed everywhere in the surroundings of man. The second age of telecommunication brought forth the speaking signs of God. And if man continues to disbelieve in the signs of God, he is only waiting for the final trumpet to be blown and everything to come to an end. The arrogance that has come into man has made him lose the justification to live on this earth anymore. After this, there is only doomsday. According to a Hadith,

“An angel (Israfeel) is standing with a trumpet (sur) for thousands of years only so that just as God bids he would blow it and everything would come to an end.” (Ibn Kathir)

Predicting the approach of the doomsday, the Prophet said,

“There will be three periods of drought - in the first period, one-third water will get over and resources would start depleting, in the next period two-third water will be finished and in the third phase all the water from earth will get over.” (Musnad Ahmad)

The survival of human life depends upon water. Life cannot be imagined without water. It was for this reason that large reservoirs of water were created in the form of oceans and seas and salt was mixed as preservative. Then as a part of the universal desalination process, water of the oceans got evaporated by the sun's heat. This water formed clouds which then precipitated in the form of rain. This was fresh, desalinated and edible water. This fresh water was stored in the form of snow atop the mountains and as glaciers. But due to global warming, the glaciers started melting and the snow on the mountains started to melt and flow away into the sea.

Hence, fresh water reservoirs started getting mixed with the salty water of the seas. Many rivers like the Ganges are drying and there is great concern about water all over the world.

The prediction of the Prophet of the age in which one-third water of the earth will dry has already come to pass. Now we are approaching the second age when two-third water of the world will get over. This situation is similar to that of the sailor in the poem, Ancient Mariner written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The mariner is very thirsty and reaches the middle of an ocean, but because of the salty water he remarks,

Water, water everywhere, not a drop to drink!

Today again when all the fresh water is becoming salty, we are on the verge of the 'water, water everywhere, not a drop to drink'.

A recent news item elaborated how the Earth would become uninhabitable by the year 2050. It further remarked that none of the conferences are yielding anything as nobody is ready to implement the suggested changes. Despite this it is only the scientific community which is extremely worried on account of the impending doom; all others are living as frivolously as ever.

It is time now that we exert our utmost for the cause of spreading the word of God so that on the Day of Judgement, the plea of unawareness stands null and void and God can decide between the sincere and the insincere.

May God guide us to do dawah work and may we find a place in God's guesthouse!