

The Problem of Conditioning

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Excerpt:

In his talk, the Maulana explains that the problem of conditioning is a very serious one. Upon his birth without exception, man undergoes environmental conditioning which is responsible for building his personality. And because human environment is filled with negative items, his conditioning from the very beginning is in negative emotions rather than positive ones.

In the light of a verse of the Quran, the Maulana explains a critical fact. Man performs an action and thinks that he performed a very good act and sacrificed a lot, but in reality, his action becomes unfruitful (in the eyes of God!) How this happens is a matter of profound significance and demands deep reflection!

Drawing from another verse of the Quran, Maulana explains the meaning of “rujz” (dirt). It is often thought that “rujz” refers to “shirk” but Prophet Muhammad never performed shirk, then what does this verse mean? In order to understand the meaning of this verse one must reflect upon what the Prophet did in Mecca, after this verse was revealed. Despite the fact that Mecca had become a centre of polytheists, Prophet Muhammad never protested or created unrest or violence. Instead, he began utilizing the gathering of pilgrims as the audience for disseminating the message of God.

Towards conclusion he remarks, that the only way in which the present-day Muslims can secure the blessings of God is to engage their efforts and resources in dawah work and spread the message of God, far and wide deploying all their energies in the process. They must therefore, analyse the situation and re-assess and re-organise their priorities.

The lesson:

In a polytheistic Mecca, Prophet Muhammad had two options - he could either create chaos and launch protests or he could consider them as madu and do peaceful dawah work. Prophet Muhammad opted for the latter and instead of protesting, he started presenting the message of the Quran to them. In keeping with the Prophetic example, Muslims cannot harbor hatred and negative feelings for madu; they can only be well-wishers of their madu. They must view everyone as a potential madu, to whom the word of God can be spread!

Introduction

The problem of conditioning is a very serious one. People either do not know about this or take it in a limited sense of meaning. But in actual fact, it is a profound problem, which can even ruin the entire life. According to a Hadith

Har paida hone wala sahi fitrat pe peda hota hai.

Lekin uske ma baap usko Yahudi, Nasrani ya Majusi bana dete hain. (Al Bukhari)

[A child is born on nature. It is the parents who mould him as a Jew, a Christian or a Zoroastrian.]

Because this Hadith mentions about Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians, it is considered that this Hadith is attributable to these three communities only; but this is not correct. This Hadith is actually applicable to all of us and will have to be understood in greater sense otherwise its meaning would not be clear.

Environmental Conditioning

The Hadith cited above actually refers to environmental conditioning. God created man on right nature and by way of creation there was no differentiation or discrimination between any two men. God is fair to all.

It is upon his birth that man, without exception, undergoes environmental conditioning which is responsible for building his personality. Since the beginning, environment has been a source of violence and negative thinking. This is because human environment was not composed of angels; instead Satan always played a dominant in shaping human thought and consequently his environment. Therefore man's conditioning was negative instead of being positive. Man did not get conditioned in piety, love of God, God-realisation because his environment did not nurture these qualities within him. This was the case of all – those who had a secular mindset and even those who followed all rituals but their actions spoke differently.

A new beginning of man is marked by de-conditioning. Companions are recorded to have said that first they de-conditioned themselves and then they could understand the Quran.

Evils of conditioning

Today morning, I received a phone call and the caller said that he wanted my guidance as per Islam, on an issue. He said that he was being wrongly implicated for a murder and wanted to know an *amal* so that he could save himself. His mindset was a result of some books that refer to the Quran as a book of amal. Thinking on these lines, he thought that Quran will provide a solution to his problem.

As I thought about it, I realized that the Muslims have a very limited understanding of the Quran. Either they think that by reading it, they will be mysteriously rewarded or they think that it is a book of amal, which can provide mysterious solutions to their problems.

It is most unfortunate that thinking and introspecting in the context of our daily issues is not synonymous with reading and reflecting upon the teachings of the Quran to find guidance. I read a news item which said that Quran provides the solution for all ills in the world! Ironically, the same newspaper carried a news item which lamented about how Muslims have become the victims of conspiracy! Muslims were depicting that the Book, which as per their claim provides the solution to all problems of mankind has in fact not provided a solution to its distressed proponents!

I got my answer in the following verse of the Quran,

Say, Shall I tell you of those who will lose the most through their actions? They are those whose efforts have been wasted in the life of the world while they thought they were doing good.

(18:103-104)

According to this verse, man performs an action and thinks that he performed a very good act, but in reality, his action becomes unfruitful (in the eyes of God!) In other words, man thinks that he has sacrificed a lot but the truth is that his action bears no result near God. This is a matter of profound significance and demands deep reflection.

When man's actions are rendered futile?

Let me explain this with an example, which explains how man's actions, which will lead to a result in the hereafter also present before him an immediate result of his doings, in this world itself. Muslims for instance made countless sacrifices in the last two hundred years. But their efforts did not yield any result. Following a trail of failures, Muslims devised a new way of glorifying the result-less sacrifices, by eulogizing how so many men sacrificed their lives for the "cause."

Thinking about this, I reached the following verse of the Quran, which was revealed in the initial phase of Prophet's mission in Mecca,

Shun uncleanness. (74:5)

In the above verse, Prophet is being ordained to shun uncleanness or *rujz*. People think that "rujz" refers to "*shirk*" but Prophet Muhammad never performed shirk, then what does the above verse mean? In order to understand the meaning of this verse, we will have to reflect upon what the Prophet did in Mecca, after this verse was revealed.

In the early days of Prophet Muhammad's mission, Mecca had become the centre of polytheism. Several hundred idols were placed inside the Kaaba and as a result, several pilgrims used to visit Mecca to pay veneration to their respective idols.

Despite the fact that Mecca was the centre of polytheists, Prophet Muhammad never protested or created unrest or violence. Instead, he began utilizing the gathering of pilgrims as the audience for disseminating the message of God. This incident clarified to me the meaning of the verse cited above. In this case, Prophet Muhammad did not consider the polytheists as *mushrik*; *instead he considered them as his* madu! Prophet Muhammad had two options - he could either create chaos and launch protests or he could consider them as madu and do peaceful dawah work. Prophet Muhammad opted for the latter and instead of protesting, he started presenting the message of the Quran to them.

I was struck by the revolutionary idea which is being presented in this verse! It encourages believers to see positivity in negative situations and to see advantages in disadvantages! This meaning was well-understood by a British Orientalist, who remarked about the Prophet of Islam,

He faced adversity with the determination to wring success out of failure!

The result of this positivity was that first Medina then Mecca and subsequently the entire Arabia came within the fold of Islam.

Application in the context of present-day Muslims

At the time of the emergence of modern western civilization, the greater part of the world was politically dominated by Muslims. The Ottoman Empire at the western extremity and the Mughal Empire on the eastern border had become symbols of glory for the Muslim *ummah*. Owing to their political mindset, the Muslim empires came into direct conflict with the western colonial empires and, in the long run, the Muslim empires were vanquished. This brought to an end 1000 years of their political supremacy. People in general tend to accept what they see on the surface, so that Muslims all over the world came to hold that, in the break-up of their empires, the upholders of western civilization were the oppressors, while the Muslims were the oppressed.

If we consider the message in the above verse, the Muslims should have considered the western colonial empires as *madu*, instead of considering them as expansionists. If Muslims would have reflected upon the Quran, they would have got a big lesson but because of political conditioning, they could not realize it and started hating the west considering them to be enemies! Now over two hundred years have elapsed and their efforts have not yielded any result. This is what the verse of the Quran cited above meant that the actions will be considered as result less before God!

But Muslims failed to put this Quranic formula to use. I once went to an Arab country where Italian forces entered and people started talking about Jihad etc. During those days, I visited a museum in the country, and I saw a poster which had the following message written upon it - *Aaj izzat ke saath mar jao, qabl is ke ki kal zillat ke sath tumhe marna pade*. [Die a respectfully today before you are put to a humiliating death tomorrow.] The attitude conveyed in this message is not Quranic. The message of the Quran is to consider all others as '*madu*'. This means that the expansionists were *madus* for the Muslims.

Instead what made matters worse—as a direct result of this negative psychology—was the emergence of certain Muslim leaders in the first half of the twentieth century, who expounded their own political interpretation of Islam. Such phrases like, *Bring back Salahuddin* were made famous in the entire Arab world, which referred to bringing back the days of Muslim glory as they were in the past!

The Muslims failed to understand that such negative thinking was the '*rujz*' (dirt) that they had to let go. In other words, to think of people as expansionists and idol worshippers and to harbor negative feelings for them is *rujz*, which must be refrained from.

Failure of Muslims

Muslims failed to see the Europeans and Americans as madu, who had arrived till their doorstep. Given the state of affairs, a dawah revolution should have come about in the entire Muslim world. Muslims should have put the invasions, attacks and army marches behind and availed the great dawah opportunity, that had opened up.

I have read about *Hasan Banna* who was in Alexandria where the western European military forces were deployed and when they used to march, he used to get hurt! Harboursing the hatred in his heart against them, he rose up in opposition of the western forces. The question is why did *Hasan Banna* feel hurt? Instead, he should have utilized the opportunity of inviting them to Islam! Prophet Muhammad never felt hurt when hundreds of idols were placed inside the Kaaba!

It is critical for Muslims to understand that since all the sacrifices in terms of lives, money and effort that have been made by them, in the last two hundred years have been resultless, it means that these actions were not acceptable to God. The Quran clearly says

You will have an upper hand if you are believers. (3:139)

This is a very serious issue. The reason why Muslim efforts have been rendered futile in the last two centuries is because these efforts remained bereft of divine succor.

Expansion of western European nations was followed by the Americans but Muslims harboured negative sentiments for them and saw them as intruders. This Rujz (dirt) in their heart led to 9/11 but even this event did not subdue the American dominance. American power was demonstrated in how they entered into Pakistan and killed Osama bin Laden. In other words, the efforts to jeopardize the Americans resulted in their own loss. They remained devoid of divine blessings! This is an incomparable loss. Unfortunately, Muslims have not realized the loss yet. They are busy creating hue and cry all over the world and have been engaged in falsely justifying their actions, which is a greater crime!

Principle of Introspection

The principle of introspection in Islam is not only applicable to an individual but also to an entire community. When the Muslim efforts failed, they should have re-assessed the situation to find out the mistake because of which God's blessings were lost. But instead of introspecting, Muslims kept complaining about others!

For instance, the political administration of Palestine was divided in 1948 between Israel and Arabs. Even today, after so much has happened, Israel's twenty percent population comprises of Arabs, who live in that country happily. It was only from the point of view of political administration that half of Palestine was given to Israelites. When this happened, the Israelites who were in Diaspora, began to return to Israel. Drawing from the Quran and Hadith, Muslims should have thought that now that the Jews who were spread in various parts of the world are returning, there lies a great opportunity to do dawah work with them.

It is clear from the Quran that Prophet did dawah work with Jews. According to the Quran

Say, People of the Book, let us come to a word common to us that we shall worship none but God and that we shall associate no partner with Him (3:64)

Palestine, which is symbolic of the fact that for **addressing the** Jewish mindset, the Prophet Muhammad made their qibla as his own, is where Muslims have committed such extent of violence.

It is most unfortunate that the present-day Muslims have no realization of doing dawah work. Following the example of Prophet, people of Israel should have been taken as madu. Instead, Arabs continued their armed struggle and to this day, their share of occupation has been reduced from it was in 1948 to merely the areas surrounding the West Bank and Gaza strip. Not only were their actions rendered fruitless, they became counterproductive. In such a situation, it was required that they re-assessed and re-organised their priorities.

Example of introspecting in societal life

On the occasion of Uhud, Prophet Muhammad received the news that the Meccan leaders are closing in to launch a big offensive on Medina. It was decided that the Muslims would defend themselves outside Medina, near the mountain Uhud.

Some old companions said that the history of Medina tells that if whenever defense has been done from within the city, it has been successful and whenever they went out of the city, the campaign was unsuccessful!

But the young companions insisted that they must go out of Medina to fight the battle. This decision was not in favour of Muslims and they faced significant setback and reaped severe consequences. Many companions were killed and even Prophet Muhammad was badly injured.

This strategy did not prove useful, so when the next time, the Prophet Muhammad got the news that a 12,000 strong Meccan army was about to launch an offensive on Medina, the Prophet did not go out to defend. Instead, the companions dug a trench, which together with Medina's natural fortifications, rendered the confederate cavalry (consisting of horses and camels) useless and Medina won the campaign without bloodshed. (Seerat Ibn Hisham) This was an example of revision and reassessment.

This is what Muslims have to do today. They have to realize why is it that they failed against the European, American or Jewish nations. They should come to a unanimous conclusion that dawah work can save them, both in this world and in the hereafter. Because it has been proven, time and again that Muslims cannot win if they take the path of war. Pakistan for example has announced that we fought with India four times and faced defeat and we no longer have the power to fight India.

Similarly, all Muslims should declare that we fought against European, American or Jewish nations and faced defeat, so now we will follow the policy of Hdaybiyyah.

Hdaybiyyah is an instance of diverting the efforts to peaceful dawah work rather than wasting it away in war. The Treaty of Hdaybiyyah was a ten year no-war pact, executed on unilateral terms and conditions dictated by the polytheists. The end of fighting was in fact, synonymous to the opening of the door of dawah. The truce had created an open atmosphere in which there could be a free exchange of thought between the opponents. In this way, the Treaty changed the sphere of combat. Formerly, the competition between the two sides had been held on the battlefield where the Muslims' antagonists had the upper hand. Now rivalry shifted to the field of intellect and in this the theory of the one God clearly triumphed over polytheism.

Conclusion

The present-day Muslims are committing a double mistake and paying the price of their wrong policies. For example, Muslims in America have set up an organization called, *Media watch*, which has the task of compiling and spreading any news item, which gets published in media, against the Muslim community! I fail to understand the result that their efforts are yielding.

I was thinking today that the present-day Muslims have committed a grave crime! Internet for example, had opened a unique opportunity for spreading the word of God to the entire world. Every house in the world has a computer nowadays which makes it really easy to spread the word of God.

But if you check the Muslim websites, they are filled with negative items propagating ideas like conspiracy and victimization etc.

Age of communication was brought about by God so that Muslims could spread the word of God to every household on Earth. This was to bring into fruition the following Hadith

No house – big or small – shall remain in this world where the word of God has not entered.

(Musnad Ahmad)

Instead of following Prophetic guidance, Muslims are only engaged in spreading the word of hatred and conspiracy everywhere while positioning themselves as victims. The present-day Muslims are actually guilty of committing two criminal acts! (*Gunaah par sarkashi ka izafa!*) The first crime is that they did not utilize the dawah opportunity even when *madu* came to their doorstep in the form of expansionists, merchants, tourists and students etc. Turkey for example, has had 31 million tourists in the last one year. This happens everywhere else. But Muslims failed to view them as *madu*.

The other crime is that Muslims have filled the internet with negative items. Such an approach is highly unislamic. Do Muslims only have negative news to give to the world? These efforts of Muslims turned counter-productive and failed to yield any result. Now is the final time when Muslims must re-assess, introspect and analyze their actions.

Habt e amaal (wasting away of seemingly good actions) is an open proof that help of God did not arrive to help Muslims in their futile struggle because several verses in the Quran clearly state that if you are on the right path, God's help will definitely arrive!

The world can come to an end any time. According to the Quran

It [Doomsday] will suddenly overtake you. (7:187)

What if our world comes to an end today evening and all the Muslims are made to appear before God. What answer will they give when God will ask why when such a gigantic dawah opportunity had been given to the Muslims and *madu* were sent to their doorstep did they continue to spread negativity instead of spreading the word of God? My father used to say,

Khuda ko muh dikhana hai!

The entire community has to stand before God and be answerable for not acknowledging and acting upon the dawah opportunity! God will ask that when your Prophet's example was that people came as idol worshippers and he looked at them as *madu* and what stopped you from following in his footsteps? According to the Quran

You have indeed in the Prophet of God a good example. (33:21)

By not following the example of Prophet Muhammad, Muslims are risking their very status of being called as *Ummat e Muhammadi*. This title is only for those who live by the Prophetic example.

The example presented by Prophet Muhammad was that only the coming of a person should be seen and not the intention with which he has come! Because when a person has come to you (irrespective of his intention), it opens an opportunity for you to do dawah work! Till date, several situations arose because of which people reached out to Muslim nations. But because Muslims did not avail the dawah opportunities that God opened up, they cannot be called *Ummat e Muhammadi*.

The biggest reason for failure to recognize and work on the dawah opportunity was the political conditioning of Muslims. They became conditioned to look at everything from a political perspective, which consequently led them to hatred. Muslims have developed a communal mindset and view everyone through that lens. It is required that they should break this conditioning and view people with Prophet Muhammad's lens so that irrespective of their purpose, they are viewed as *madus*! Anyone who is unaware of the religion of God, should be considered as *madu*!

Printing press and global communication, prevalent in the modern age made dawah work extremely easy in comparison to the time of Prophet when companions had to memorise the Quran themselves and recite it to the *madu*. Such companions were called *mukris*.

Today, Quran is available in the printed version and it can be produced in any language. All we need to do is spread it. God has opened up opportunities and made the world a global village to facilitate dawah work!

So, on one hand, God sent *madu* to dayee's doorstep and on other hand, he provisioned for such circumstances as would allow global dawah work to take place. However, instead of utilizing this opportunity, Muslims started committing violence against their *madu*.

It must be clearly understood that Muslims cannot harbor hatred and negative feelings for *madu*; they can only be well-wishers of their *madu*. Just like, a merchant acts in a customer friendly manner, similarly, the actions of all Muslims should be in *madu*-friendly manner. They must view everyone as a potential *madu*, to whom the word of God can be spread.

The time for re-assessment has come. I pray that God gives us the sense to rectify ourselves and to spread the word of God to all!

Question - Answers

Q1: Muslims think “zawal (degeneration)” refers to the loss of their political power and think it come to an end only when political power is restored? Is this correct?

A: This is entirely wrong. According to the Quran

We bring these days to man by turns. (3:140)

Political power is not the monopoly of Muslims. In order to judge whether Muslims have succumbed to *zawaal or degeneration*, their Islamic spirit will have to be judged. Political power is not a subject of *zawaal*. Muslims will be judged on whether they have fear and love for God and whether they live their lives in accordance with the Islamic values. Political power is only a worldly activity and always changes hands. It is not a matter of *zawaal*. If values are alive, community is alive, else not.

Q2: Taking negative things in a positive sense requires high thinking. How should we develop it?

A: This requires de-conditioning of our mind because man is born on right nature but succumbs to affects of conditioning as he grows up. The real work therefore is to help people de-condition.

The human mind can be likened to an onion. In the centre of the onion, initially, there is a small kernel or the natural state of the mind. Then layers start forming, one upon the other over this inner kernel. This process continues until the inner kernel is totally covered with external layers. Now, apparently, layers alone are visible. The kernel is completely covered and remains invisible. To find the kernel of the onion, all the external layers have to be removed. Similarly, all the conditioning has to be removed in order to restore the natural man to his pristine nature. This process of de-conditioning is similar to the removal of the onion's layers. Then, we have to understand that everyone may be born spiritual, that is, one may be spiritual by nature, but, after birth, one lives in a society, which, with its multiple influences conditions or shape man's personality or nurture one

based on negative feelings. The individual, to regain his spiritual character, has, therefore, to de-condition himself through a superior intellectual process, which will necessitate his mental de-conditioning.

Q3: Parents remained concerned about the worldly attainments of their children. I have never found any parents who are worried about what will happen to their children after death. Why does this happen and what does it reflect?

A: This mindset reflects *zawaal* (degeneration). Not having political power is not *zawaal* but not having Islamic values. This mindset that parents wish material attainments for their children can be checked by telling people about the hereafter and explaining to them that this world is a testing ground and the hour of doom can strike anytime and after that the entire humanity will find itself before God, liable to be answerable for the deeds it committed in this world!

Q4: How should we know that what we are doing is acceptable in the eyes of God?

A: You cannot be given an assurance in advance that your deed has been accepted and that is why the following verse of the Quran states that

Pray to Him with fear and hope (7:56)

The greatest achievement of man is that he should be able to attain God's mercy. But whether man has been able to achieve this or not will be made known after death. By reading Quran and Hadith, man can get to know if he is following the right path or not. But knowledge of whether it is accepted or not will be given later to man.

Q5: Why do people fight for the greatness of religion?

A: The act of fighting for greatness of religion is against religion. Religion seeks spiritual awareness and as such, the acts which entail fighting in the name of religion are entirely baseless. It is neither in Islam nor in any other religion.

Q6: What is more effective Islam from madu's point of view – theoretical or practical?

A: There is only one Islam, that which teaches *qauli shahadat* (refers to dawah work). There is nothing known as *amali shahadat* (refers to political interpretation of Islam). Latter is a baseless idea. Dawah work is done by speech and strengthened by argument based on reason and rationale.

Q7: Why have Muslims become distant from Quran?

A: This is a result of the phenomena of degeneration which mars every religion or ideology. It is this *tul e amad* (degeneration), which creates the gap between the proponents and true religious guidance. According to the Quran,

They should not become like those who were given the Book before them, whose hearts with the passage of time became hardened and many of whom were disobedient. (57:16)

Q8: How should I deal with the problems that arise due to other men? A: For problems that originate because of man, one must exercise *sabr* (patience). Just like to protect himself from rainfall, man builds a roof, similarly, for man-made problems, he requires the roof of *sabr*. This amounts to reality-based planning. He must reflect on the situation and keeping the strengths and opportunities in mind, plan his future course of action. This is the right way to deal with such problems..

Q9: Does the responsibility for maintaining peace rest upon madu or dayee? A: I would say that it is the responsibility of a dayee to strive to maintain peace, unilaterally because without peace there can be no dawah work. Prophet did everything to bring about peace and a dayee should always act such that he does not de-stabilise the peace in society.

Q10: How can I lead my life peacefully?

A: Peaceful life has just one secret – learning to ignore unpleasant situations. According to the law of nature, man will always face unpleasant situations so he must learn to ignore, avoid and manage these situations. It is this art of management that will help man discover how to stay peaceful even in chaotic times.

Q11: How will we know that now it is time to stop doing dawah work (itmam e hujjat)?

A: This does not apply to believers in general and is specific only to God's prophets. A prophet is informed by God, through His angels to stop doing dawah work when He decides to bring about the end of the world. But in general context of man, there is no itmam-e-hujjat.

Believers have to keep doing dawah work and pray. It is not right to think that we have brought the work to finish; it is not for us to decide. Our only duty is to do dawah work continuously.

Q12: How can we save ourselves at an individual level from Habt e amal?

A: We must learn to exercise patience. Whatever is done in haste will lead to a wrong result. Man must exercise patience and avoidance. Patience is not cowardice or receding, it is only the acceptance of a realistic approach.

Q13: Muslims say that according to the Quran Jews will never be rectified, however hard you may try, except some of them. Is this correct thinking?

A: This thinking is outrageously wrong. The reference of Jews in the Quran is actually in the language of hammering. This becomes understandable because so many Jews embraced Islam then and continue to do so even now. Let me give you an example from the Quran,

You will never worship what I worship (109:5)

Despite this verse which was revealed in the context of Meccans, they [Meccans] later embraced Islam. This is language of hammering and should not be taken in literal sense.

Q14: Dawah, Hijrat and Jihad – is that an order?

A: This is no order. In fact, there is no order. Deriving such an order is akin to making an opinion basis events that took place in history. This is not the right approach. Such things are inferred basis situation and the time prevalent.

Q15: Man realizes God but if he not able to continue the process of discovery for some time, the spirit of realization starts diminishing. Please comment.

A: Marefat (God Realization) is not a one-day occurrence. According to the Quran

Every day He manifests Himself in a new state. (55:29)

Man if observant may receive inspiration from God each day, which will increase his marefat. If you keep praying to God and reflecting upon the word of God, you will get new items of marefat everyday because they are countless. Like this, marefat remains a living marefat! If you stop getting new items of marefat, it will lead to stagnation.