

Revival of Ibrahimi Mission

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Excerpt:

In his talk, the Maulana explains the importance of Hajj and its message for a believer.

Relating the tradition of Prophet Abraham, the Maulana explains that he was a part of a great plan by virtue of which a generation was to be brought into being that unlike the conditioned mindsets then, would be receptive to the message of God. The Prophet and his companions brought this to fruition. Not only did they discover God themselves, enthused with the spirit, they spread the message of God to as far-off lands as they could. With the end of prophethood, this duty has devolved upon the present-day Muslims. A believer will be selected for paradise basis the struggle and the work done to bring to fruition the mission of the Prophet.

At Hajj, a pilgrim vows to present himself for accomplishing the divine mission in response to the call of the Prophet Muhammad – a call that echoes in the valley of Arafat till date and entreats all believers to spread the message of God to mankind!

Lesson:

Hajj is the reminder of the message of Prophet Muhammad whereby a pilgrim is required to pledge lifetime allegiance to the dawah mission. The mission did not end with the Prophet; it lives on, to be discharged by those who believe in God and wish to be rewarded in the hereafter.

Introduction

I chose this topic because yesterday was the occasion of *Eid-ul-Adha*. During this month, Hajj is performed at Mecca and Eid al-Adha starts after the descent of the Hajj from Mount Arafat. In this sense *Eid-ul-Adha* is the extended chapter of Hajj and the two occasions share a significant relationship.

The importance of Hajj is that while pilgrims observe all the rites in Mecca, Muslims all over the world observe some rites locally. It is estimated that this year, almost four million Muslims gathered to perform Hajj from over 198 countries (this is the total count of member countries in the United Nations!). In other words, Muslims from all over the world were represented at Mecca. Some directly performed Hajj and others who were not in Mecca did so, indirectly, owing to the modern-day communication advances that allow live proceedings of Hajj to be telecasted on television and viewed by Muslims, the world over. At this point, it becomes important to reflect upon the real purpose of Hajj and whether it is being met in present times.

In earlier times, Hajj did not take place at such a grand scale but modern means of travel and communication have led to enormous increase in the number of people who visit Mecca to perform Hajj. However, be it the possibility of transporting pilgrims to Mecca through airplanes or allowing Muslims world over to witness the live telecast of the pilgrimage, these epoch-changing developments lead us to question the purpose for which God provisioned such extraordinary progress! According to a tradition, Prophet was asked by the companions about sacrifice, he replied,

Ye hai tumhare baap Ibrahim ki sunnat (Mishkat)

This was the way of your father, Ibrahim!

The question is: does the sacrifice of an animal on a special day amounts to following the way of Prophet Ibrahim. Did God bring to pass all the developments and progress for this purpose? This cannot be so and thinking such would amount to underestimating *Hajj*!

According to the Quran

Strive for the cause of God as it behoves you to strive for it. He has chosen you and laid on you no burden in the matter of your religion, the faith of Abraham, your forefather.

(22:77)

This verse implores believers to strive and do *Jihad* and follow the footsteps of Prophet Abraham. God has chosen the believers for this task. But what kind of *Jihad* did Prophet Abraham undertake? There is no proof whatsoever to establish that Prophet Abraham used sword or fought battles against others. *Jihad* in this case, refers to the practical struggle undertaken by Prophet Abraham on the path of dawah work.

Prophet Abraham did dawah work in ancient Iraq (Ur). Failing to receive a positive response from the people of his city, he travelled to Egypt, Syria and Palestine to propagate the message of God. In those days, polytheism was so dominant that its continuity in history had been long established. As such, any child born into this situation was influenced by the surrounding atmosphere and was so immersed in polytheism that no effort even at the level of the Prophet was successful in weaning him away from it. People did not adhere to the concept of the oneness of God, despite the utmost struggle on the part of Prophet Abraham. So, Almighty God planned that a new race be brought into existence which should be nurtured far away from the atmosphere of polytheism. For this purpose, the area of *Hijaz* was selected. This area, being dry and without any vegetation, was desolate and uninhabited. The plan was that a devotee should be settled in this area where he would become the progenitor of a pure race. Hijaz (Mecca and Medina) was a waterless desert and to settle anyone in such arid surroundings amounted to sacrificing him alive. Acting at God's behest, Prophet Abraham inhabited his wife *Hajra* and infant son *Ishmael* in Hijaz. When his son, Ishmael was about ten years old, Prophet Abraham had a dream in which he was sacrificing him. Abraham, a great believer in God, took his dream literally and set himself to perform what he thought was the will of God. But, according to tradition, God Almighty sent his angels and asked him to sacrifice an animal instead of his son. The spirit of this incident has been alluded to in the following verse of the Quran

We ransomed him with a great sacrifice (37:107)

Here “Zibh-e-azeem” (great sacrifice) did not refer to the sacrifice of a goat (or animal). On the contrary, it referred to “greater” sacrifice of Prophet *Ishmael*. As per God’s plan, Prophet Abraham had settled his son and his wife in the arid desert of Hijaz – a sacrifice they did to raise a generation that would be free from societal conditioning. The entire plan was to aid dawah efforts. Though the people of his community did not respond to the call of Prophet Abraham, he did not quit doing dawah work. This reflects a very important trait of a true dayee – such a person would not succumb to despair but would re-plan the approach and undertake creative dawah work. If the community present then was not receptive, God planned to raise such individuals as would be receptive to the message of God. It was from this generation that all those who are known as Companions and Prophet, came about. Being free from conditioning, this group was able to quickly recognize the truth and dedicate themselves for it.

Hajj-at-ul-Wida (The Last Pilgrimage)

On the occasion of Hajjatul wida, the last pilgrimage, which the Prophet performed two and a half months before his death, he was accompanied by one lakh and forty thousand Muslims on the plains of Arafat. After performing *Tawaaf* (circumambulation), *Sai*, and discharging the other rites of Hajj, the Prophet reached Arafat, which is considered as *Rukun-e-Azam* (prime act of Hajj) and marks the culmination of pilgrimage. According to Hadith

Arafat mein aapne qayaam kar liya toh aapka hajj ho gaya (Musnad Ahmad)

Whoever stood at Arafat before dawn, will have performed (the rituals of Hajj)

When Prophet performed Hajj, did it amount to mere observance of certain rituals? No, it did not. It was an illustration of the life a God-oriented person should lead in this world. His life circumambulates around God, he has to run and struggle for the divine mission, sleep and wake up for the work of God and to travel and rest for dawah mission. An Islamic scholar wrote, *Hajj Jihad ki mashq hai*. This is incorrect. In reality, Hajj is the *mashq* (practice) of dawah work because all the acts represent the elements (*ajzaa*) of dawah work.

Prophet Muhammad gave his last sermon, from a hill called *Jabal-e-Rehmat* (The Hill of Forgiveness, Mount Arafat). It was not possible that the voice of Prophet would reach the 1,24,000 companions who were present. So, it was decided that Prophet's uncle, Abbas would repeat the words of Prophet in a louder voice.

From the last sermon of the Prophet, interpreters have drawn *huqooq-e-insaani-ka-mansookh* or the declaration of human rights. But this is not correct. The focus of the last sermon was to instill within the companions, the spirit to undertake planning for dawah work. Man being an eternal being needed guidance to make his life successful. Prophets were sent by God for the purpose of guiding man. The last sermon therefore was not a declaration of human rights but an announcement, which marked the ending of an era and beginning of another. The fighting and bloodshed, which were a rampant feature of the tribal age was to last no more. Instead, a God-oriented era was to begin where the believers would strive to impart the message of God. According to traditions, Prophet said while addressing the companions,

**Ae logon! Allah ne mujhko sari duniya ke liye rehmat bana ke bheja hai. Toh ye
paighaam tum saare duniya ke logon tak pohuncha do (Ibn Hisham)**

[O People! No Prophet or messenger will come after me and no new faith will be born. All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others and those to others again.]

There would be no Prophet or messenger after Prophet Muhammad. The Quran says about him

I am but a plain warner. (29:50)

It is important to reflect here that this mission of the Prophet of imparting guidance and warning did not come to an end with the last sermon at Arafat. Even today, when the pilgrims gather at Mecca, they say

**Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik, laa Shareeka Laka Labbaik, Innal Hamda wan
Ne'amata Laka wal Mulk, laa Shareeka Lak**

[My Lord, I am ready to present myself before You, and ready to submit to Your Will]

What does the above convey? What is the Hajji marking his presence for? This pledge of a pilgrim conveys his willingness to be a part of the mission that was passed on to all believers by the Prophet of God. A pilgrim is required to pledge his allegiance to this mission for lifetime. The mission did not end with the Prophet; it lives on. Those who go to perform Hajj, don't go there to perform rituals but go there to listen to the voice of Prophet, which resonates in the valley of Arafat. Hajj is the reminder of the message of Prophet Muhammad - that his mission did not finish in the 7th century; it was destined to reach the 21st century. A pilgrim in reality goes to take this pledge at Hajj but even upon his return, the Ibrahimi mission is not revived. This is because pilgrims go to perform Hajj without due preparation.

Preparing for Hajj

The preparation of Hajj entails that the pilgrims are told about the purpose of undertaking a pilgrimage like Hajj. According to a verse of the Quran

Thus We have made you a middle nation, so that you may act as witnesses for mankind.

(2:143)

Acting as intermediaries, the prophets used to receive guidance from God and convey it to the people. The process continued for thousands of years until the arrival of the Prophet Muhammad with whom the chain of prophethood ended. But even after the end of the prophethood, the conveying of God's message to the people had, and still has to be continued. Generation after generation, innumerable people are born and, before they die, they must be told about the reality of life and the divine commandments. After the death of the Prophet, this responsibility had to be discharged by the Muslims. Now, with the end of the prophethood, the entire Muslim community stands between God and the people, a position formerly occupied by the prophets. This is not a reward for superiority but a massive responsibility. Muslims should be most eager to carry out this mission, should make it their principal goal and be ready to sacrifice their all for it.

It is important to note that in the verse of Chapter 22 (cited earlier); Jihad does not refer to fighting or engaging in a battle. The following portion of the verse clarifies that *Jihad* in this case refers to *Jihad-e-Shahaadat* or *Jihad-e-Dawah* or *Jihad-e-Tabligh*. Jihad means utmost struggle and in this case it refers to doing one's utmost to do dawah work and disseminate the word of God so that no man is left unaware of the message of God. This is the mission to understand which a pilgrim undertakes Hajj.

I have read the speeches of the Imam-e-Haram which lay stress on *Ittihaad* (unity). I have heard about *Ittihaad* since my childhood but despite the Imam's vehement urge for unity in every Hajj, there is still no unity amongst Muslims.

Lack of unity among Muslims

It must be understood that unity does not come through sermons. Unity is the outcome of a common mission. In case of Muslims, this mission is dawah work - to make mankind aware about the Creation Plan of God.

It must be made clear that mere observance of rites and rituals would not suffice to lead people to paradise. A believer will be selected for paradise basis the struggle and the work done to bring to fruition the mission of the Prophet. Only a deep understanding of this mission would bring about unity (*Ittihaad*) amongst the Muslims.

The fact that Muslims from over 198 countries were represented during Hajj and those who were not there physically, owing to modern mean of communication, had access to the live telecast, is no ordinary occurrence. Why did God usher in such an age? This was done to internationalize the mission of Prophet Muhammad.

When pilgrims would go with such a prepared mind to perform Hajj and the Imam being a prepared mind himself would know what will address the minds of Hajjis, not only would it foster the understanding of the mission but also unite people in their efforts to bring to fruition the prophetic mission.

It must also be understood that a dayee must be creative to come up with new ideas so as to see opportunities in every situation. When a problem arises in the path of dawah work, a dayee should be able to identify other ways of doing dawah work. This is illustrated in the life of Prophet Abraham. He did dawah work in Ur, Iraq. When people did not respond to his message, he travelled to Egypt, Palestine, Syria etc. He kept travelling between Asia and Africa and undertook international travel to find seekers. He realized that people owing to their deep-rooted polytheistic conditioning are not able to understand and this is conveyed in the following verse

My Lord! They have led so many men astray! (14:36)

It was then that God showed this way to Prophet Abraham – to work towards a new generation which would be receptive. Neither despair nor fighting or killing could have helped. Therefore, to think creatively while doing dawah work is also an *Ibrahimi sunnat* (Prophet Abraham's way). If it is not working out in one way, then a dayee would try and work it out in a different way. Today God has opened all avenues – Quran is a preserved book, published in the era of printing press and we live in the age of communication. Distributing the Quran is in today's times the biggest *sunnat* of Prophet Abraham.

Importance of the Quran

Recently, a 25-year old doctor, Gaurav Patil committed suicide by jumping from a building in Delhi. The suicide note he left behind read, "*I have gone through all truths of life and now I am going for a journey in search of the real truth.*" His colleague and roommate revealed that Patil used to read philosophical books, based on the truths of life.

Philosophy in my opinion is the knowledge of confusion. I have never met a single person who found something in philosophy other than confusion. He was looking for truth in philosophy, which had confusion. There is therefore just one book which guides man to truth and which has clarity, par excellence. According to the Quran

We have made it easy to learn lessons from the Quran. (54:22)

This verse means that anyone who reads it is able to understand the message of the Quran. The case of Gaurav Patil is actually the case of everyone in the world because all of us have the pursuit of truth interwoven in our nature and potentially all of us are seekers. Despite reading philosophy, people are not able to find truth and consequently they continue to live in frustration till they die.

On one hand is Quran, the book that has guidance for mankind and on the other hand are Muslims who are the keepers of the Quran. It is therefore more than obligatory upon Muslims to spread Quran to the entire mankind. Instead of wasting away their resources in weddings, and other societal rituals, they must whole heartedly involve themselves in the dawah mission. I would like to strongly emphasize that Muslims cannot use their money for themselves until they have used it for dawah work; not utilizing money for dawah work and using it for self and family is not Islamic. Only after taking out the share for supporting dawah work, the money becomes legitimate for personal use. The following verse in the Quran reads

They ask you what they should spend [in God's cause]. Say, 'Whatever is surplus to your needs.' (2:219)

This verse tells that one's share in one's earning is only need-based, rest is for doing dawah work. This is the lesson for which man goes for Hajj but people do not return with this lesson because they are not prepared minds; they simply learn some rituals. Even the Imam who addresses the pilgrims during Hajj is not a prepared mind to make this distinction clear. It is important to explain this to Muslims at all forums so that they understand their obligatory duty of spreading the Quran and involve themselves wholeheartedly, with their money, resources and energy.

When Prophet Muhammad performed the Hajj and addressed the companions, he said,

Kya maine pohuncha diya? Kya maine pohuncha diya? Those present said, Haan aapne pohuncha diya. Prophet raised his finger to the sky and said, "Ae Allah gawah reh!"

(Ibn Hisham)

[All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others and those to others again... Be my witness O God, that I have conveyed your message to your people.]

The mission did not end with the Last Sermon of the Prophet. The obligatory duty of spreading the message of God now devolves upon the Muslims.

As soon as the period of trial ends, this incident will be repeated. God will question all on the Day of Judgment. This is alluded to in the following Quranic verse

Then shall We question those to whom Our message was sent and those through whom We sent it. (7:6)

The contemporaries of the Prophet Muhammad would confirm that he disseminated the message to them but what about the billions of men who live on Earth today? Will all of them confirm that their contemporary Muslims spread the message of the Quran? No, they would not!

Such Muslims would not be worthy of being inhabited in paradise and God would not be merciful upon them – all those who wasted their resources of worldly grandeur and ostentation and followed personal whims instead of working for the divine mission. Such souls would not find shelter anywhere in this universe!

Conclusion

Those who go to Hajj and say “*Lab baik, Allah humma Lab baik*” do not understand the responsibility this pledge entails. At Hajj, a pilgrim vows to present himself for accomplishing the divine mission in response to the call of the Prophet Muhammad – a call that echoes in the valley of Arafat till date and entreats all believers to spread the message of God to mankind!

Fourteen hundred years ago, this call of the Prophet had such a deep impact upon the companions that instead of returning home, they headed in the direction of their mount and went about spreading the word of God to far-off lands such as Asia and Africa! It is the same spirit that is required today!

Therefore, I say that a believer's energy, his money and resources are not legitimate for him till he has not used it for God's mission! Just like, at the time of harvest, a share is taken out in the name of God.

The mission of believers is to spread the message of God. Those who call themselves believers but do not give from their resources what they should for God's mission, are leading a unislamic life! Dawah work and Hajj are not simple acts. Hajj illustrates the renewal of the mission of Prophet Abraham - the dawah mission! At Hajj, pilgrims observe the rites metaphorically and imbued in the spirit, they return and cast themselves in performing duties to take forward the dawah mission.

The mission of Prophet Abraham was dawah work and Hajj becomes a reminder of the responsibility that devolves upon the believers to spread the word of God! Only those would inculcate this spirit and do not perform Hajj ritualistically, would become a prepared mind and renew their faith!

I pray that God accepts us and gives us share in this life and the life hereafter.

Question-Answer

Q1: Muslims do not consider dawah work as a responsibility. When the task is so big and Muslims are not giving a positive response, what should be done about it?

A: Present-day Muslims do a lot of work in the fields of social or community service. None of this is Islamic because the Prophet Muhammad never did it. In fact when he was asked to be a part of such endeavours, he said that he had not been sent for this.

I do not subscribe to the approach supporting community work even from a secular point of view because it kills incentive. Unless people face a challenge and are given an incentive, they would not be able to develop. What is desired is high levels of education. Best institutions should be built wherever possible. The real incentive is to motivate and inspire and provide for the highest level of education.

Q2: If I have discovered the truth, will I never be frustrated?

A: As per my experience, discovery of truth leaves no room for frustration. This is because man remains tensed because of matters of the world. But if he finds the truth which next to God is truth, his relation with God is established and then he starts receiving divine succor and inspiration. It is important to note that this is not applicable for self-proclaimed truth. Only that which is truth next to God is what attaches you to God.

Q3: What is the limit of applying mind in religion?

A: Religion is not a matter of rituals. It is a higher form of intellectual activities. Religion develops and engages your mind towards development. Why would you want to limit this?

Q4: What are the signs that a person loves God and that God loves a person?

A: There is no objective criterion for this. The journey begins when man finds out that his sole concern is God. The Quran gives the criterion to discern between those who would be rewarded in the hereafter and those who would not be.

The first criterion pertains to one who would become deserving of punishment in the hereafter. The Quran says for such a person

He used to be happy with his own people. (84:13)

According to this criterion, those who earned and exhausted their resources on their family did not discover God! They could not think beyond their kith and kin.

The second criterion pertains to those who would be rewarded in the hereafter. For such individuals, the Quran says,

When we were among our families, we were full of fear of God's displeasure. (52:26)

Such people were always actively thinking about their accountability towards God. In other words, despite being with their family, their sole concern was God.

Q5: What is a good character?

A: In social sense, good character is “predictable” character. That is, other members of the society are able to predict the response of such a person. It means that people know that if such a person is trustworthy and will not commit fraud. If he is criticized, he would not be angry. Instead he would remain patient and reflect. Such level of predictability would make an individual a good character in the society.