

The Goal of a Believer

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Introduction

It is very important for man to have a *well considered goal* in life. Such a goal keeps one away from all sorts of distractions and saves from being led astray. Today's edition of *The Times of India* (dated June 27, '09) has published an article about Michael Jackson. The deceased pop singer gained immense popularity world over and went on to become a super-earner and a super-achiever. The paradox is that this man who earned enormous wealth and fame, died at the age of fifty, under a debt of 500 million dollars.

The main reason for his failure, despite all the worldly success, was the lack of a big goal in front of him. Jackson married a white girl but their marriage could not last and Michael had to pay 25 million dollars in alimony. He underwent numerous plastic surgeries that only ended up ruining his face. Because Michael did not have a big goal to achieve he kept getting distracted by trivia. This holds true for both individuals as well as nations.

Let us take the example of America. Between the first and the second world wars, it was famously said that the *business of America is business*. Gradually however America lost this focus and started pursuing the idea of becoming world leaders. The US forces entered into Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq etc and incurred huge expenditures. In the Khaleej war alone, America incurred five trillion dollars. This deviation ravaged their economy to such an extent that America went into one of the greatest recessions of recent times.

Islamic point of view

Man must ignore all the petty distractions and move towards his big goal. I am reminded here of a super-fast train that stops only at big junctions. The same should be the case of man. He should leave smaller distractions and continue traversing the path that would lead him towards his bigger goal. This is the secret of success.

The Islamic point of view is alluded to from the following traditions that have been recorded in *Ibn Maja* and *Ad-Darmi*. According to one such tradition, Prophet Muhammad drew a straight line and several lines deviating from it. Pointing to the straight one, he said that it was the road to God. Each of the deviated lines he said, led to a Satan. The Prophet then recited these verses from the Quran:

This is My straight path, so follow it and do not follow other ways that will lead you away from His path. (6:153)

This is my way on the basis of sure knowledge, I call on you to have faith in God. (12:108)

The word '*baseeratin*' in this verse refers to vision. It means that this road leads the one who traverses it towards his 'well considered goal unlike the path chosen as a result of reaction which puts one off the course. The same is happening with present-day Muslims, lack of such a goal allows them to get distracted and provoked over trivial matters.

The Prophetic Way

The Prophetic course of action can be summed up in the following sentence:

Activism in dawah work and status quoism in other matters

This model highlights that importance of being well-considered for dawah activities and ignoring all other things. This is the path for believers. This method can be well understood from the example of Prophet Yusuf. The Quran has a full chapter on Prophet Yusuf, which begins on an unusual note. It says,

We recount to you the best narratives. (12:3)

The word 'best' here does not refer to novelty but the lessons that may be derived from it. Prophet Yusuf was born in Cana, Palestine. Series of events led him to Egypt where he was wrongly accused and imprisoned. While at the prison, Prophet Yusuf neither attempted to escape nor spoke ill about those who had wrongfully indicted him. Instead, he availed the very first opportunity of interaction that he got with his prison mates to do dawah work and give them the message of One God. The verse in the Quran that recounts his interaction with his prison mates is as follows:

O my fellow prisoners! Are many diverse gods better or God the One, the Almighty. (12:39)

Availing dawah opportunities

The biggest lesson in the incidents governing the life of Prophet Yusuf is that despite going through many odd and provocative situations, he never lost focus from his goal of doing dawah work. He seized the opportunity as he got it, even if it were at the prison.

Here I am reminded of the period of the fifth Abbasid Caliph – Harun Rashid. During his caliphate, the empire was very vast. Sitting at his palace, he once looked at a cloud passing by and said with pride, "Go and rain wherever you wish to, the revenue shall come to me." Similarly, dawah opportunities exist for us throughout the world. All we need to do is avail them. According to a hadith, Prophet Muhammad once said that,

*If only one person gets guidance because of you, it is better than getting the whole world.
(Al-Haakim)*

In light of this Hadith, our only aim should be to avail all the possible dawah opportunities and to spread the creation plan of God to all. But like everything else, availing the dawah opportunity too demands a price. Speaking to an Indian Muslim residing in the US, I came to know that he was filled with negative emotions for that country. I was deeply troubled to realize that such a person will never be able to avail dawah opportunities because he is not willing to pay the price that Prophet Yusuf paid. Despite the injustices done to him, neither did he lose the sight of his goal nor did he let himself be governed by any negative emotions. This is the price of doing dawah work – to free our mind from all negative thoughts (arising from our situations) and stay focused on the goal.

An important Islamic principle

It is important to recognize the subtleness of meaning as perceived by us and as inferred by others. For instance, a man once said to me that violence is not the monopoly of Muslims alone, others do it too. This was not the right approach. I told him that what Muslims call '*jihad*' is perceived by others as an act of terrorism. I told him a Hadith which explains how Prophet remained forever cognizant of the impact that any activity undertaken would cast on the image of Islam. According to a tradition in *Ibn Hisham*, Abdullah bin Ubayy was a constant trouble maker. His own son wanted to kill him but Prophet Muhammad strongly discouraged him saying that (even if Ubayy's own son killed him) it will give people an opportunity to say that Muhammad kills his own companions.

But today, Muslims react to situations without paying heed to what the consequences may be. For example, the uproar over the cartoons published in Denmark gave the world an impression that Muslims are an easily angered and violent community. The above stated example of Prophet gives us a very important Islamic principle that even if an action is as per the norms decided, we will not do it if chances are that others may not perceive it as right.

For instance, when Talibans resort to flogging, it brings world-wide infamy to Islam. This is in stark contrast to the method of Prophet Muhammad. I shall recount an instance from his life which strongly conveys his adherence to the above stated Islamic principle. The original edifice of Kabah as constructed by Prophet Abraham was rectangular. This however got destroyed due to a natural calamity and the present structure – a cube – was built by non-believers. According to a tradition in *Al-Bukhari*, after Mecca came within the fold of Islam, Prophet Muhammad (while in conversation with Ayesha), once expressed his desire to re-construct the Kabah on its original base. Ayesha asked him what stopped him from doing so and he replied that people might react belligerently to such an act thinking that they changed the base of the age-old Kabah and this may damage the image of Islam. So he left the thought. Thus Prophet exemplified the principle of image-building in Islam. This principle outlines that a good act also shall not be undertaken if it is at the risk of bringing a bad name to Islam. This principle is so important because it has a direct bearing upon the supreme goal of Muslims – Dawah work and any such incident acts like a roadblock in the process of dawah and serves as a distraction for the Muslims.

Price of Distraction

The image of Islam in the world today is of a religion that *sanctions* violence. This is because Muslims no longer have the higher goal of dawah work on their mind and are marred by distractions. But there is a price to pay for indulging in these distractions, that is, wastage of time, money and energy. For example, US spent approximately five trillion dollars in the Khaleej war but could avail nothing out of it. Therefore it was a sheer waste of resources. Muslims world over are engaged in breeding negativity and complaints. This complaint mentality has distracted them so much that they have lost the sight of dawah work. If the addressor (dayee) is filled with hatred and negative feelings for the addressee (madu), the former can never do dawah work with the

latter. Just like a businessman cannot afford to be hateful towards his customers and adopts a customer-friendly behaviour, similarly a dayee must *unilaterally* adopt a madu-friendly behaviour.

Conclusion

Every believer is a dayee and must therefore undertake dawah work. Some people propagate the wrong belief that dawah is not *farz-e-aen* (compulsory activity) but is only a *farz-e-kafaya* (optional activity). But such a notion is completely wrong. Performing dawah work is the responsibility of every believer. Prophet Jesus said, '*Love thy enemy*'. It means that one must love everyone including on's enemy. Loving the madu is a pre-requisite to performing dawah work.

The example of Prophet Yusuf brings forth that a believer must tolerate any problem that befalls him and concentrate his efforts only on performing dawah work. Despite being humiliated and disrespected, he did not speak ill of anyone rather he did dawah at the very first opportunity he got for interaction.

Prophet Yusuf set yet another example when at the time of a *mushrik* king, he accepted the offer of minister-ship under him. Unlike Muslims of today, he did not lead a coup against the king to overthrow his rule (haraam in Islam) but utilized the opportunities available to do dawah work.

Believers must therefore save themselves from all the distractions and trivial concerns so as to continue doing uninterrupted dawah work.

May God accept our efforts!