

Lesson 22: The Message of Islam

The Message of Islam

The spirit of the message of Islam can be summed up and shown in this phrase:

“La ilaha illa Allah.” – There is no god but Allah.

It means that, apart from the One and Only Allah, nothing must be worshipped.

This is the great, fruitful, abundant secret of the tree of Islam; for if we compare Islam to a tree, and its ideology to the seed or the root, we must realize that the health and fruitfulness of the tree is connected to the health of the seed or the roots. And then we see how strong, how steadfast and steely the basis of the ideology of Islam is, as revealed in this one phrase.

Contentment and Faith Go Together

If all man's wishes were rooted in material things alone, and man felt no desire in his soul to transcend the material world, happiness would come from securing material things. But we know and see that man screams out with the voice of his spirit against the depths of technology and materiality. With every increase in material things, the craving of society for the spirit and for spiritual wants increases, and this phenomenon is clearly evident in the recalcitrance and disorder in society.

The proof is the complete disruption and crisis, which has cast its shadow over civilised societies since the beginnings of the twentieth century, to the point where the spiritual upheaval of society, especially among young, is out of control.

The Russian psychologist and sociologist, Sorokin, said: “Because, in the culture of a materialist civilisation man is only an organism with life, and is in no way attributed with the values and absolutes of goodness beauty and wisdom, no way has been envisaged to reach spiritual perfection and spiritual wants.”

Unless the sublime spins of man who, like the keen-winged falcon, desires the exaltation of flying above the mountain ridges and peaks, soars to places far from human hands, and unless it is refreshed at the source of spiritual virtues, it will not be free of these disruptions and outbursts. All the crimes and desires for gratification are signs of the breaking of natural roaring waves which will not be quiet until they reach the safety of the shore. And the shore of safety is only faith in One Limitless Power, Infinite Knowledge, Pure Perfection and keeping away from imaginary gods. By remembering such a power, and having true faith in it, the heart finds contentment. The Qur'an recites this great truth in the shortest of sentences:

In remembrance of Allah are the hearts at rest (13: 28)

Indeed the peace of hearts is only in remembrance of Allah. Only leaning towards and attention to God can regulate human nature and guide it to happiness. Islam weighs the value of man by this very standard and criterion and says:

Surely the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the most God fearing of you. (49: 13)

The aim of Islam is to show, to indicate the better and higher horizons, and to save man from the ash-cloth of his material skin and his lusts, so that man may know the real pastures of green and luxuriant pleasures, and desist from journeying in the furnace of material ways and walk in the true way of contentment.

O ye who believe! Respond to Allah and His messenger when He calls you unto that which will give you life (8: 24)

By acquiring knowledge of Islam, the dead soul and dominant faculties of man will be made alive, will rise up and grow, and this life will reach the source through the windows of the laws and the perspective of the aims of Islam.

Now let us look at some of these perspectives: Islamic fraternity; watchfulness by the people; the status of knowledge; work and effort; the structure of the family.

1. Islamic Fraternity

Islamic brotherhood is based on the highest human virtue, for it is far from hollow rootless formalities. It is a reality for the strengthening of self-sacrifice in the Muslim individual and the keeping alive of the spirit of purity and sincerity and faith. One of its direct practical results is the creation of responsibility and sympathy between individuals in all aspects of life. On the basis of this brotherhood, a Muslim cannot refrain from sharing his brother's difficulties.

The project of initiating Islamic brotherhood in the first days of Islam was so skillfully and interestingly put into action that the poor and the rich were brothers in heart and soul.

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) explained Islamic brotherhood in this easy and expansive way:

“The believers are brothers one to the other, and are in the likeness of one man in that if one part is in pain, the other parts will not be at peace.”

He also said – may the peace of Allah be upon him:

“The spirit of Islamic brotherhood does not allow you to be full and your thirst quenched while your Muslim brother is hungry and thirsty, nor that you should be clothed and your Muslim brother naked. You must wish for him what you wish for yourself. Support him as he supports you; when he is traveling guard his property and honor. When he returns hurry to see him, give him respect as if you were his and he were yours. If he is fortunate, give thanks to Allah for his gladness. If he is in difficulty, help him.”

2. Watchfulness by the People

Cod has created white blood-cells in our bodies to be vigilant like guards against microbes, the enemies of the body's health; to defend against invasion, so that no disorder occurs in the human constitution.

This can be a clear model for Muslims to be awake concerning events in their own society like watchmen and guards, so that whenever spirituality and goodness and rightness fall captive into the clutches of evil and falsity they can root it out, and, if necessary, give their life for this serious thing.

Otherwise, of the society, nothing will be left but a lifeless corpse. For if men remain silent in the face of every injustice and impertinence, and stay quiet like a lagoon, they will create an atmosphere for breeding worms and leeches. Their brightness will soon become filthy, stinking and polluted.

So, like the irregular waves of the roaring seas, society must always be struggling, moving, attacking encroachments and shaking up so that impurities can have no effect on its existence.

To create a living society, Islam has let it be known that the questions of attentiveness and watchfulness by the people is one of the most necessary cubes of the Muslims and always warns them that the duties of society are of equal weight and on an equal footing with individual duty, and that Muslims must also satisfy their religion by this great means.

In this area the Qur'an gives two commandments as practical advice: bidding to good (*amr bil-ma'ruf*) and forbidding evil (*nahy anil-munkar*).

Imam Baqir (a.s.) said: “Bidding to good and forbidding evil are great responsibilities on which the other necessary foundations repose.”

The day on which Muslim society forgets these two great laws, they will forfeit their greatness. It must not be forgotten that bidding to good and forbidding evil are a great duty for every individual Muslim, and that by putting these into action they can create a healthy, living society.

3. The Status of Knowledge

In the remote past, that is, before Islam, education was not public, and all people did not have the permission or the right to acquire knowledge. Education was the monopoly of a special group, i.e. the ruling class, the aristocracy, the nobility and royal families. This situation was more evident in countries whose system of government was based on the class system.

The Arab peoples especially, and the inhabitants of the Arabian peninsula, were further behind other countries as regards civilisation and culture, so that at the time of the advent of Islam, in the Hejaz itself, those who were literate (i.e. those who could merely read and write) could be counted on the fingers.

In such a time, among such a people, Islam raised the position of esteem of education to the level of a religious duty from the very first.

It is the Qur'an, which in many places honours the searchers after knowledge with its divine and sweet call and gives them an elevated rank^{[1](#)}.

The Prophet (S) said: "The acquisition of knowledge is an obligation on every Muslim; Allah loves the reamed.^{[2](#)}"

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Seeking knowledge is a duty."^{[3](#)}

Imam Baqir (a.s.) said: "(Just as zakat on wealth is so that you give a part of it in the way of Allah)... Zakat on knowledge is also that you instruct others with your knowledge."^{[4](#)}

The history of Islam is a sure witness to the fact that Islam cultivates knowledge. This constant recommendation to the acquisition of knowledge by Islam was the reason that Muslims, especially in the Middle Ages when Europe was in ignorant dark ness were always in advance and were the standard-bearers o knowledge and civilization.

Of course, it must be remembered that Muslims taught know ledge together with deep faith in God and attention to spiritual values, and did not merely give their attention to profit in this world. Regretfully, in later centuries, when they fumed away from the clear and beneficial commands of Islam knowledge also fell from their sight, and thus they dropped behind in the caravan of the advancement of human knowledge.

4. Work and Effort

These are two of the inherent principles of nature and creation God has put within them the secret of progress and move meet. The appearance of spring, the season of movement i nature, the flowing of rivers and streams, the bubbling up o springs, nest building and the coming and going of birds, the blowing of the breeze, the caressing of the gentle warmth of the morning, the waves of blessings of the

rustling wind, the twist and turns of the branches and flowers and leaves in the murmuring beckoning of the breeze, the pushing forth and growth of plants, the migration of birds from one climate to another, all these are attractive allegories and enticing allusions from creation for man, to lift him out of dispiritedness and to raise him and make him move, to rejoice, work, strive and endeavor to grow and flow and to be in movement.

On the basis of this natural law, Islam has called to work and to striving. ‘Ali the great and beloved leader, said:

“One who has land and water at his disposal, but does not utilize these two great resources and becomes poor – may Allah curse him.”

Imam Sadiq (as.) said: “Allah loves no work as he loves agriculture – this usefully productive work.”

And: “Cultivators are the treasurers of the people.”

Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) also said: “Attend to various kinds of trade Allah loves a trustworthy and truthful tradesman.”

From Imam Sadiq (a.s.) again: “honor and magnanimity come from effort and work.”

And Imam Kazim (a.s.) said: “Allah is disgusted with the quiet, lazy man.”[5](#)

Imam Baqir, our fifth great, beloved leader – may the peace of Allah be with him – went once to his field outside the town of Medina when the weather was burning hot, and sweat dripped down his sleeves, so that he could work there. A man who believed that work was a disgrace in the eyes of Islam came up to him and said to him in great surprise: “You, who are one of the Quraysh and of the first rank why must you give so much esteem to this world and come to this place in this sweaty weather? If you died in this situation, what would you do?”

The Imam replied: “If my death comes, I have died in submission and obedience to Allah. For I have come here to gain my family's expenses, so that I do not have to stretch out my hand in need before you or others. Man should fear that time when his death comes and he is occupied in sin and disobedience.”

The man replied: “I wanted to counsel you, but it is I who have been advised!”

It must be kept in mind that although Islam lends importance to trading and agriculture and other work and counts them as worship, it does not on the other hand sanction excess in and overdoing work. Islam says:

“Devote some hours of the night and day to work, and share out other hours for the other material and spiritual aspects of life.”[6](#)

Rest, attend to the situation in your family attend to Islamic duties, pray, read the Qur'an and visit your

friends.

5. Marriage and Running a Family

Marriage is another, natural principle. Even plants have a kind of marriage to bear fruits and be fertile. Contrary to the ideas of some, marriage is not entirely an individual and Personal matter, for it has an entirely social result.

The strength and stability of descendants, the survival of society and nations, and also the creation of certain ideals are all connected with it, because the following of some of the aims of man and his society will be entrusted to those descendants who come after.

Thus marriage harmonises human instincts and protects from sin, and perhaps it was these necessities that caused God to make the institution of marriage have such a strong physical attractive for individuals so that if they did not realise its advantages they would pursue it by the requirements of instinct.

But this instinctive desire must be controlled by the guidance and commands of religion, for if not, like a car with a headstrong driver, the result will be a crash into the depths of the valley of misery and ruin.

For this reason Islam lays much stress on marriage and the ease of satisfying its conditions. The holy Qur'an says that marriage is a divine gift and necessary for peace and comfort.[7](#)

The Prophet said: "Marriage and having a family are my way and tradition." He also said – may the peace of Allah be always with him– Whenever someone whose conduct and faith meet with your approval, and he comes to you desirous of marriage, be ready, for if not, disaster and corruption will seize the land."[8](#)

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said: "The Prophet fixed the dowry for his daughters and womenfolk at no more than five hundred dirhams."[9](#).

Although that was a very small sum in the eyes of the notable families of those days, this is itself a sign that Islam suggests the project of marriage for the control of natural instincts, and makes it very easy.

Moreover, Islam in this area has severely fought against gilded illusion in marriage and class differences and has said that inappropriate and mistaken formalities are futile. Miqdad was a Muslim man with a head full of fervor and a heart overflowing with faith, but he was poor and without a tribe. Daba'ah was the granddaughter of Abdul-Mutalib daughter of an uncle of the Prophet of Islam and from the Quraysh. The Prophet, with their desire and delight and with Discretion, married these two, and this well-girl lit up the poor cottage of Miqdad with the warmth of her love for the rest of her life.

Imam Sadiq – may Allah bless him – explained the philosophy of this marriage: "The Prophet did this to bring marriage out of the framework of class formalities, and so that others should follow the Prophet,

and know that the most honored individuals before Allah are the chastest.” [10](#)

We can see another example in the life of the fourth Imam (a.s.). Abdul Malik Marwan learnt that the Imam had set his female slave free and had married her. In his view it was not fitting for someone of the position of the Imam to marry a freed slave girl, so he sent a letter containing an admonition to this great man. The Imam wrote in his answer:

“Your letter has arrived... You suppose that marrying a girl of the Quraysh would be a reason for an increase in my prestige. This is a mistake, because there is no better than the Prophet of Islam from whose family I am. I married my girl slave because she is chaste in the eyes of the religion, and that is no small thing. Allah, by the blessing of Islam, has cleared away imaginary prejudices and privileges; the standard of worth is faith and piety. This admonition, which you have written to me would have been appropriate in the tune of ignorance and it is connected to the time before Islam. Wa's-salam.” [11](#)

Questions

1. What is the meaning of la il ha illa Allah?
2. What would happen if man felt no desire in his soul to transcend the material world?
3. What did the Russian psychologist and sociologist Sorokin say about the culture of a materialist civilisation?
4. What are crime and desires for gratification signs?
5. What is the shore of safety?
6. What is the peace of hearts?
7. What is the aim of Islam?
8. What is the Islamic brotherhood based on?
9. What did Imam As Sadiq say about brotherhood?
10. What would happen if men were to stay silent in the face of injustice and impertinence?
11. Why must society always be struggling?
12. What were two commandments Qur'an has given to Muslims to create a living society?
13. Why is it important for Muslims not to forget these laws?
14. What will happen if Muslims obey these laws?

15. Was education public before Islam?
16. What was the position of education esteem during Islam?
17. Who said that seeking education is a duty?
18. What is the history of Islam ostore witness to?
19. Muslims teacher knowledge in a deep faith to whom?
20. What are two inherent principles of nature and creation?
21. What did Imam Ali say about what Allah loves in work?
22. What did he also say about trade?
23. What did Imam Kadhimi say that Allah is disgusted with?
24. What did the man who disgusted about work say?
25. What did Imam Baqir reply?
26. What did the man reply?
27. Is marriage and entirely Individual and personal matter?
28. What did prophet say about marriage?
29. Who was Miqdad?
30. Why did Abdul Malik Marwan write a letter to Imam Zainul Abideen?
31. What did he think about Imams actions?
32. What was Imams response?

[1.](#) see LVIII; 11

[2.](#) Usul al-Kafi vol. I, p 30–41.

[3.](#) Usul al-Kafi vol. I, p. 30–41.

[4.](#) Usul al-Kafi vol. I, p. 30–41.

[5.](#) All these six sayings are from Wasa'il ash-Shi'a, vol. 12. vol. 12.

[6.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, saying no. 390.

[7.](#) See 30: 21.

[8.](#) Wasa'il ash-Shi'a, vol. 14, p. 7 and Kafi, vol. 5, p. 347.

[9.](#) Kafi, vol. 5, p. 376.

[10.](#) Kafi, vol. 5, p. 344

[11.](#) Kafi, vol. 5, p. 344

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