

**THE NEED TO LEARN  
FROM CURRENT, EVENT**

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## THE NEED TO LEARN FROM CURRENT EVENTS

By

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The following speech was delivered at the residence of Dr. I. C. Dawoodbhoy in Bombay, in the presence of a select gathering of scholars and medical practitioners.

Gentlemen,

The Muslims have been enjoined in the glorious Qur'an to learn from past events and draw proper inference from them because there is a definite relationship between means (asbab) and ends (nataij). The way roots and leaves, even weeds, have certain specific properties and produce their effect, in the same way our mode of conduct and way of life react on us—rather they are more powerful as they have a built-in mechanism to make or mar our lives (here and in the hereafter). The food articles and plants (edible and medicinal), in short, everything has been created for the sake of protection and preservation of mankind. It is life which is all important and we should take lessons from the incidents which occur around us. Because we have not only been directed to draw morals from important events narrated in the glorious Qur'an, but admonished for not doing so :

"Many are the signs in the heaven and the earth (so full of meaning for man) yet they pass them by, hardly taking notice of them."

Surah Yusuf : 105

There are many signs in the heaven and the earth which people pass by without noticing and do not learn from them. We have been warned in another chapter in still harsher terms :

- 1) "But for those who disdain to understand neither the sign of Allah (in the heaven and the earth) nor the admonition of warners (the Prophets) will avail."

Surah Yunus : 101

- 2) "Soon will We show them Our signs in the regions (of the earth) and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this (the glorious Qur'an) is the Truth."

Surah Ha Mim as-Sajdah : 53

The most tragic events towards which the 'millat' should devote its immediate attention are the frequent disturbances which take a heavy toll of life and property and every time occur with increased savagery and brutality. Why do these disturbances take place ? Do they occur by chance or they have become part of the destiny of the 'millat' ? Is there any short-coming on our part or in our mode of living, or the responsibility lies with the administration. This is the most pressing problem and a challenge of our times. It is not a big gathering but the select persons who are present here are more important because they carry more weight in society on account of their educational and cultural background and achievements. I think what I will say to this elite audience would be more useful in many respects than a speech at a public meeting.

Gentlemen,

The first and foremost duty of the 'ummat' is to share with their countrymen the boon (the true religion) which has been bestowed by Allah. The 'ummat' should worry over the fate of other people because the Prophets (peace be on them all) used to worry over their 'ummat'. The last Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) has been consoled on account of it in the glorious Qur'an :

"It may be that thou torments thyself (O Muhammad) because they believe not."

Surah ash-Shura : 3

It is the primary responsibility entrusted to the 'ummat' especially those who are 'heir to the Prophets' (peace be on them all) i. e. Ulama, that right guidance (hidayat) should spread as far and wide as possible. It should be their endeavour that the light (of Islam) with which they have been blessed by Allah should illuminate the four corners of the world :

"Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoin right conduct and forbid what is wrong. Such are they who are successful."

Surah al-i-Imran : 104

There are many verses in the glorious Qur'an in which the present 'ummat' has been saddled with the responsibility of preaching, in fact, it has been mentioned as the main reason for its excellence over all the past generations !

"You are the best community that has been raised-up for mankind. You enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency ; and you believe in Allah,"

Surah al-i-Imran : 110

The other responsibility which devolves on the 'ummat' according to their religion and also as a matter of sound reason is that it should acquaint other people with the Fundamental Principles of Islam in the mutual interest of both. What is Islam; what are its teachings and what is the ultimate outcome of following or failure to follow them :

"Eat ye and drink ye to your heart's content, for that ye worked (righteous deeds). Thus do We certainly reward the doers of good. (O ye unjust!) eat ye and enjoy yourself (but) a little while for that ye are sinners. Ah woe, that Day to rejectors of Truth."

Surah Mursalat : 41-46

Then we should introduce ourselves and the principles which we have been commanded to practise and which we have accepted as the way of our life. We should also try to bring other people closer to ourselves by exemplary conduct and persuade them to study the religion which we represent and follow. They should be made curious about Islam. They may start thinking as what type of people the Muslims are and the religion they follow. The other people must be brought to realize that the Muslims do not ill-treat or harm anybody. They wish well for one and all. The Muslims do not consider the worldly possessions the be-all and end-all of everything in life. It seems they have different values and ideals before them. They cannot be dissuaded from their principles for any consideration. They cannot be incited to oppression etc. Is there any other world which they (the Muslims) have in view which is concealed from us ?

I may point out that there are certain events which influence the mind of a person and sometimes bring about a revolutionary change in his life.

Jabbar bin Salma was a companion (Sahabi) of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him), when asked how he came to embrace Islam as he was very steadfast in following his former religion, he said, 'just one short sentence brought about this big change.' Then he narrated that he attacked a Muslim (Hazrat Haram bin Milhan), with his spear, it pierced his body and he fell on the ground, but before dying he uttered the following words :

'I swear by Allah of Ka'ba ! I have succeeded.'

This short sentence set me thinking. I asked myself : what is success ? Are there different criteria of success ? I see that a person who is mortally wounded and falls to the ground, he would soon be deprived of all pleasures of life, his wife would be widowed and the children orphaned; and yet he says he has succeeded. I tried to know and understand how he considered himself successful although he was on the verge of death. I knew that he would leave all his belongings in the world. I also knew that truth sits on the lips of a dying man (even otherwise the Arabs were not prone to lies).

I enquired from some Muslims as what the dying man saw at that moment that he said, he has succeeded. They told me that I did not understand the implication of that sentence. He was happy that he died for Truth (Haqq). The Muslims believe in Allah and they know that martyrs go to Paradise. The dying Muslim might have seen a glimpse of his place in Paradise. That is why he said, he had succeeded. Then he admitted this short sentence caused him to embrace Islam.

The incident which I related is unique in the history of Islam. I do not say every Muslim should follow his example. It is not necessary either. But the Muslims should live in such a manner that other people

may be constrained to think what type of people the Muslims are : Do they not realise the value of money ? Do they not know that one can buy comforts and pleasure, command respect and authority with money? Do they not know that sometimes lies can be used as allies and the possession of wealth carries tremendous weight in any society these days ? Then why do they not try to lead a life of ease and comfort as we do ? Why cannot these persons be tempted to err with the use of money ?

The mode of our living should have been exemplary which would have attracted other people to Islam. Let us take an example and it is a challenge for the learned amongst us. The Prophet (peace be on him) preached for thirteen years in Makkah and another six years in Madina blessed with consummate expertise, as he was in preaching, performing miracles now and then and at a time when the glorious Qur'an was being revealed, but only a few people embraced Islam. But according to Imam Zohri, who is one of the trusted traditionists (muhaddis) in between the period of signing the Treaty of Hudaibiyah and the Prophet's (peace be on him) Triumphant Entry into Makkah, a very large number of people entered the fold of Islam as never before. What could have been the reason ? The Prophet (peace be on him) is the same, the glorious Qur'an is the same, but it seems as if the flood gates were thrown wide open or the thread of the chaplet (tasbeeh) was broken and the beads scattered all around.

The apparent reason behind this was that after this famous Treaty the non Muslim Arabs were free to come to Madina and have a close look at the lives of the Muslims. There was no communication between the Muslims and the non-Muslims before this Treaty as a state of confrontation had existed between them. The non-Muslims were afraid of coming to Madina.

They used to meet the Muslims either in the battle-field or sometimes in the course of their travels. There was a clause in the Treaty that non-Muslims could visit Madina and Muslims could visit Makkah without any restriction. There was freedom of movement after the Treaty came into force. The people from Makkah came to meet their relations in Madina and observed that their way of life had changed to a great extent. They noticed that they belong to the same stock, speak the same language, dress in the same manner and eat the same type of food, then how is it that their (Muslims') morals and manners are quite distinct from their own, their way of life and dealings are very different. The non-Muslims saw that as they stayed with them as guests (though they do not belong to their religion) they feed their guests first and at times allowed their children to go hungry, they looked after the comforts of the guests in preference to the members of their own family. The Muslims always employed polite language and decorum in their conversation with non-Muslims, they never indulged in gibes, taunts or sarcasm. They were also hard working and not that they had become lazy after embracing Islam, they went for prayers five times a day with all eagerness and their behaviour in the family was courteous. They were living happily among themselves with mutual co-operation and good will. What had made all this difference ? They were forced to conclude that Islam had brought about this great change in their lives. The non-Muslims of Makkah had an opportunity to ponder over the teachings of Islam at leisure and in a congenial atmosphere. They were attracted towards Islam and thousand upon thousand embraced Islam. Imam Zohri further says that the non-Muslim Arabs had the occasion to meet and observe the lives of Muslims at close quarters and Islam created a place for itself in their hearts.

The Muslims have been living in this country for about a thousand years and they have not introduced themselves in the manner they ought to have done and influenced their countrymen. Is it not a short-coming on part? The crux of the matter is that our countrymen did not get an opportunity to experience Islamic morals and exemplary conduct. They have known us as rivals in elections and competitors in business with the result that they behave with us in the way unfriendly strangers are treated. They are not aware of our inherent qualities—the quality of love and sympathy for one and all. They do not have an inkling of the earnest desire we harbour in our hearts for their welfare and well-being. We have not been able to convince our non-Muslim neighbours that it is on account of the Muslims that the Divine Mercy descends on the country and thus how essential and useful we are in this respect. If you enquire from any literate Hindu if he has studied Islam most likely, he would reply in the negative.

An Arab friend told me that when he visited the United States, some of the American friends repeatedly asked him two questions. How many wives he had in his harem and how many camels in the camel-shed. It appeared that these were the two main criteria for a Muslim in the eyes of an average American: plurality of wives and keeping of camels. The common non-Muslim in India thinks that there are two essential attributes of a Muslim. He is circumcised and eats beef—as if it were part of his religion and that he is inclined to be short-tempered. The other indication of a Muslim is that he is easily offended by the playing of music in front of a mosque. This is the image of an average Muslim which has ordinarily been projected here.

I was once travelling from Hardoi to Lucknow by train with a party. We said our prayers in congre-

gation (jama'at), I was leading the prayers. I said "Allah-u-Akbar" aloud several times as in usual. A co-traveller who had introduced himself as Chairman of a District Board earlier, very innocently asked me after the prayers: 'Maulana Saheb, when you uttered 'Allah-u-Akbar', were you addressing these words to the late Mughal King Akbar?' We have not so far tried to explain the 'azan' which is pronounced five times a day (and at some places through loud-speakers). A Muslim sage once suggested that at least we ought to have translated the words of 'azan' in Hindi. They do not know that these words simply mean: "rise upto worship," rise upto well-being," the service of worship is better than sleep, etc."

What have we been doing here all these years? When there is a disturbance, we complain, "What type of people they (the non-Muslims) are." We are living here for hundreds of years and they do not have any regard for us. No doubt, our countrymen are also at fault. The curriculum, the political system and elections too have contributed a lot to the present woeful conditions. The scholars and educationists have been told time and again that the text books of history are creating an atmosphere of hatred and fear. There are many weaknesses in our countrymen. I know all these as a student of history. I am not addressing them or the administrators or educationists at present. I will tell them all this when there will be an occasion for it. They (the Non-Muslims) ought to have tried to understand the basic beliefs, culture, social customs, morals, habits and peculiarities of the Muslims who have been living as their neighbours for a thousand years and who have taken a leading part in all-round progress of the country for a long time. Their co-religionists also live in the neighbouring countries as also in dozens of independent countries in Asia and Africa. But it is no use telling about their short-comings here. I am

addressing you and presently concentrating on our own short-comings. We did not acquaint our neighbours with Islam, I would like to pose a question before you: How many of those present here have tried to educate their class-fellows and co-workers about Islam? How many good writers have we produced in regional languages? What we do these days is that we start an Urdu newspaper. If there are four already somebody would add one more and consider it a great "jihad". Was there no need to start a daily newspaper or a weekly magazine with an attractive get-up in one of the many regional languages spoken here containing standard and authentic articles on Islam? We do not have an English daily newspaper. When there is a disturbance, we complain that wide publicity is given to one-sided views by the so called national press. We are oppressed and persecuted but we are presented as oppressors and persecutors.

I distinctly remember about a big public meeting of All-India Muslim Personal Law Board in Bombay held on 27th and 28th December, 1972, where the attendance might have been 60,000 or more. The late Hamid Dalwai demonstrated at the meeting with a few followers—may be twenty or so. But the news about the Board meeting was relegated to a corner, whereas the news about this petty demonstration was given great prominence as if it was a great event involving 10,000 to 20,000 people.

We have to concentrate on two points in the present circumstances. The number of participants in this meeting may be small, but every one present here must be having a large circle of friends. We should make an attempt to publish thought-provoking booklets and pamphlets in regional languages. It would be still better if good non-Muslim writers can be commissioned to write these booklets in their mother tongues. Because

there is a marked difference in their style and that of other writers. We should also get first rate monographs written by competent 'Ulama'. By the grace of Allah, the Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, Lucknow, has published good many booklets in regional languages which can be given to non-Muslims without any hesitation. Kindly obtain such booklets from it, and distribute them among non-Muslim neighbours and friends with a request to read them at leisure. The system of sending 'Eid cards may be extended to cover non-Muslims also. The 'Eid is auspicious (mubarak) for us because we observe fast and, Insha Allah, we would get a great reward in the hereafter which we cannot even think of in this world. The 'Eid card may convey a message about Islam—select an appropriate verse from the glorious Qur'an or a saying of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). They may read it or not. But if a person gets a good number of such cards year after year he may be inclined to read one or some of them. The message may begin with such words that today is the auspicious day of 'Eid, we are happy and we want to share our happiness with you. If this custom spreads then some day, some persons may feel how can such people be harmed when they believe in and practise such good principles of friendliness

The one best way to stop these frequent disturbances is to change the mode of living in such a manner that it may appeal to non-Muslims. They may notice that a Muslim walks in the street with his eyes cast down. He does not stare at the women passing by. He does not harm any body but helps everybody, If you are travelling by train and you have asked a vendor for tea at a station while a co-traveller has also asked for it, offer it to him if you get your tea before he does his. If he declines tell him politely that you would take it later when the vendor brings tea for you, It is unexpected of you, but these small courtesies will go a

long way in changing their attitude towards Muslims and Islam. They will be constrained to think that Islam does not preach hatred and Muslims are a helpful people. Islam does not teach to throw about provoking insinuations but tends to civilise and confer refinement. Whenever and wherever be it a market place, office or a workshop, you get an opportunity to present an agreeable picture of Islamic teachings and morals, temperament and conduct, do so by your charming manners.

I have placed my points of view in the short time we had at our disposal. There were many other things to be told, but what I have said here is enough for the present. We should now pray that Allah may accord His approbation to what has been said here in brief and make it easy for us to act on it and profitable for all of us. He may also protect and help us.

"... There is no help except from Allah, the Exalted, the Wise."

Surah al-i-Imrah : 126

The End

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