

PURPOSE OF THE UMMAH OF MUHAMMAD ﷺ AND ITS PARAMETERS—A REVIEW IN THE LIGHT OF HOLY QUR'AN

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ABSTRACT

'Amr bil Ma'roof wa Nahi 'Anil Munkar' bidding fair-deeds and forbidding unfair-deeds was the responsibility and mission of all the Ambya ﷺ [i.e., the Prophets] and Rusul ﷺ [i.e., the Messengers], who came in every human populated part of the world. After an accomplishment of the lineage of Prophetic series, from Adam ﷺ to Muhammad ﷺ, this responsibility transmitted to the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ. Consequently, the aim and objective of the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ was declared the same as it was of the Ambya ﷺ and Rusul ﷺ.

Pattern of the Holy Qur'an is an ample testimony to this theme. The Holy Qur'an explores preponderantly those aspects of the Past Prophets ﷺ life that have concerns with Da'wah such as: their ways of preaching, their ardent desire for the Hidayah [true guidance] of their people, their patience, as well as apathetic and offensive attitudes of their nation against their sympathetic and sincere admonitions; as compare to their other facets of life such as their devotion in worship and other religious observances. This theme itself speaks that the Holy Qur'an demands from the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ something special that has not been demanded from the past religious nations of the world.

This Article is an attempt to cast light on the purpose of the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ and to describe its parameters in the context of Qur'anic Verses and Islamic Teachings, and to persuade the Ummah to retreat to their true purpose of life.

ARTICLE

It is affirmed by the Holy Qur'an and Ahadith that this Ummah is created for and sent to this world particularly for the purpose of executing the task of Da'wah and Tabligh [i.e. inviting people towards Allah ﷻ and propagating His Message to His servants] beside performing various other modes of worships that used to be in practice of past nations with slight difference.

Due to this fact, if one goes through the *Sirat* [life and achievement] of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the last and final Prophet and Messenger of Allah ﷻ, he comes to know that 'the training pattern of Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ is noticeably different from the past nations' i.e., detail instructions regarding work of Da'wah has been given to this Ummah prior to the detail commandments concerning worship and other obligations of Deen. In other words, it would not be wrong to say that purpose and training pattern of the Ummah of Muhammad is same as the purpose and training of Ambya ﷺ and Rusul ﷺ.

The Holy Quran beautifully express the purpose and parameters of Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ. It says that Allah ﷻ is ¹رب الناس [i.e. Lord and Cherisher of all mankind], and His Book, the Holy Qur'an is ²هدى للناس [i.e. the guide to the all mankind], and His last Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is ³كافة للناس [i.e. sent to towards entire mankind], in a same pattern, the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ is ⁴أخرجت للناس [i.e. brought out for the benefit of entire mankind].

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Words contain in Verse 3 of Surah Aal-e-‘Imran أُخْرِجَتِ لِلنَّاسِ [i.e., brought out for the entire mankind] demands Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ to convey the message of Islam to the entire humanity irrespective of colour, cast and creed. It affirms that the responsibility of this Ummah does not end at home, school, monastery, village, city or a country rather it has been assigned the responsibility of Da‘wah and Tabligh for the whole world.

Verse 110 of Surah Aal-e-‘Imran elaborates the aim and objective of the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ and contains in it some very important themes:⁵

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَوْ ءَامَنَ أَهْلُ الْكُتُبِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ مِنْهُمْ الْيُؤْمِنُونَ وَكَثُرَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ.

Translation: *Ye are the best community that has been raised up for mankind. Ye enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency: and ye believe in Allah. And, if the People of Scripture had believed it had been better for them. Some of them are believers; but most of them are evil-livers.*⁶

The above quoted verse expounds that the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ is the most righteous and worthiest nation in the history of mankind for the mankind. Its status is خَيْرِ الْأُمَّةِ [i.e., the best nation] and its duty is أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ i.e., [serving of people by bidding good and forbidding evil]. Furthermore, with the commandment of تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ [i.e. You bid the fair and forbid the unfair] this Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ is also allowed the use of all lawful means for Daw‘ah and Tabligh to establish peace in land and confirm prosperity of humanity. These means include enforcement of Islamic Laws through the agency of the government and the use of Power [i.e., Jihad with weapon] against the power of evil, which was not permitted to most of the past nations.⁷ This permission is backed with the glad-tiding and prophecy of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ that ‘In my Ummah, there shall be right through the Day of Doom, a group of people which will remain firm and stick to [the task of] bidding the Fair and Forbidding the unfair’.⁸

About the virtues and status of this Ummah, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ states²: اَنْتُمْ تَوْفُونَ سَبْعِينَ [You are the final of seventy nations, you are the best and most honored among them to Allah]. Similarly, it is also reported through Ali ﷺ that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said³:

"اعطيت مالاً لم يعط احد من الانبياء" فقلنا يا رسول الله ما هو؟ قال نصرت بالرعب واعطيت مفاتيح الارض وسببت احمد وجعل التراب لي طهوراً وجعلت امتي خيراً الامم". تفرد به احمد من هذا الوجه اسناداً حسن.

Translation: *I was gifted with which no other Prophet before me was gifted. Companions asked: ‘O Messenger of Allah! What is it’. Prophet (s.a.w) replied: I was bestowed upon victory by fear, I was given the keys of the earth, I was called Ahmad, earth is made for me a clean place (to pray and perform Tayammum with it) and my Ummah is made the best Ummah.’*

Once 'Umar رضي الله عنه bin Al-Khattab recited 110th Ayat of *Surah Aal-e-'Imran* and then remarked: 'Whoever wants to be among this [praised] Ummah, let him fulfill the condition that Allah has set in this Ayah [i.e., to enjoin good and forbid evil].'

Ibne Jarir رضي الله عنه says: 'Those from this Ummah who do not acquire these qualities [i.e., enjoining good and forbidding evil] are just like the People of the Scriptures who are criticized by Allah ﷻ'.⁴

Another important point to be noted is that that the responsibility of work of Da'wah upon this Ummah is *Fard-e-Kafayah* [i.e. collective responsibility], which means that if a reasonable members of Muslim Ummah accomplished this task and fulfills this collective obligation on behalf of the Ummah, then this [collective] responsibility will not remain on the shoulder of each and every individual; while, on the contrary, if all the various sections of the Ummah neglect this duty; then entire Ummah will be declared defaulter. This theme is very obvious from the following verse:⁵

ولتكن منكم امة يدعون الى الخير ويامرون بالمعروف وينهون عن المنكر واولئك هم المفلحون.⁶

Translation: *Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong; they are the ones to attain felicity.*⁷

Tafseer Jalalain expounds the meaning of above quoted Ayah as:

"ولتكن منكم امة يدعون الى الخير " الاسلام " ويامرون بالمعروف وينهون عن المنكر واولئك " الداعون الامرون الناهون " هم المفلحون " الفائزون ومن للتبعيض لان ما ذكر فرض كفاية لا يلزم كل الامة ولا يليق بكل حلل كالجاهل .

The objective of the Ayah is this that a group amongst the Ummah, comprises of adequate members, should be reserved specially for this special task, while remaining members of the Ummah assist them by utilizing all of their resources while doing their best as per their capabilities and strength in their individual capacity.⁸ By this way this chosen group is responsible for the amelioration and well-being of the Ummah as well as the entire humanity.

By comparing both verses [i.e. Aal-e-'Imran 3:110 and Aal-e-'Imran 3:104] it is inferred that all sects and each individual of Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ is responsible for the work of Da'wah as per their capabilities and strength, but a group among the Ummah should be reserved merely and specifically for this task. In this sense the responsibility of work of Da'wah is *Fardh-e-Kifayah* [i.e. collective responsibility] for this Ummah.

Surat-ul-'Asr one of the most comprehensive Surahs of the Holy Qur'an about which Imam Shaf'i رحمته الله عليه remarks⁹: [If the people were to ponder over this Surah, it would be sufficient for them], describes that the exhortation to one another to the 'Truth and Consistency' [وتواصوا بالحق وتواصوا بالصبر]¹⁰ is also a basic requirement for the attainment of success besides having a 'Faith in Allah ﷻ and doing good-deeds'. These meanings are manifesting itself in the following Surah:

﴿والعصر- ان الانس لفي خسر- الا الذين امنوا وعملوا الصلحت وتواصوا بالحق وتواصوا بالصبر﴾

Translation: *By (the Token of) time (through the Ages). Verily Man is in loss. Except such as have Faith and do righteous deeds and (join together) in the mutual teaching of Truth and of Patience and Constancy.*¹¹

‘Exhorting to one another to the Truth’ implies that the members of the Ummah join together for teaching and preaching of Truth, while ‘the exhortation to one another to Consistency’ means that they should remain steadfast and help one another to remain consistent while executing the task of Da‘wah.

The said *Surah* expresses unequivocally that ‘moral and spiritual reform’ by way of exhorting to one another to the Truth and Consistency are also among the fundamental obligations of believers in addition to ‘correct belief and good conduct’.

A broader and preponderant branch of the work of Da‘wah is *Jihad*; which means ‘striving to the utmost in the cause of Allah ﷻ for the establishment of Allah’s word in His land’¹². This is what *Jihad* signifies in a nutshell, though its form varies as per time and place limits.

The entire life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is *Jihad*. His thirteen years in Makkah, his migration to Madinah and his ten years stay in Madinah for the purpose of establishment and propagation of Deen is absolutely a *Jihad*. His patience against hardships and privations was *Jihad*; his confrontation with the powers of evil in the Battles fields was *Jihad*; his expeditions and his dispatching of Letters to the Rulers and Emperors of the world were a form of *Jihad*; because these efforts were all for the same purpose of same cause i.e. Establishment and Propagation of Deen.

Hence, wherever the duty of *Jihad* has been imposed by the Qur’an it means that a believer should make utmost effort to take people out from the utter darkness of ignorance to the perfect light of Islam; from the worship of creatures to the worship of their Creator; from the narrow conception of the world to its broad conception and from the life of self-conceit and selfishness to the life of self-sacrifice and selflessness.

The Holy Qur’an referred this great task as ‘Help of Allah ﷻ’ because of its vital importance and those who take part in it are regarded as ‘the Helpers of Allah ﷻ’. The Holy Qur’an states:

يا ايها الذين امنوا هل ادلكم على تجارة تنجيكم من عذاب اليم- تومنون بالله ورسوله وتجاهدون في سبيل الله باموالكم وانفسكم ذلكم خير لكم ان كنتم تعلمون.¹³

Translation: *O ye who believe! shall I lead you to a bargain that will save you from a grievous Penalty? That ye believe in Allah and His Apostle and that ye strive (your utmost) in the Cause of Allah with your property and your persons: that will be best for you if ye but knew!*¹⁴

In Ayat of the Holy Qur’an *Jihad* has also been described as a prerequisite of *Eman*. It regards only those people as a ‘True Believers’ who: (i) believe in Allah ﷻ, (ii) in the

Truthfulness of Messenger Muhammad ﷺ, (iii) in the Divine Guidance and also (iv) those who get ready all the time to strive in the sacred cause with their person and property. The Holy Qur'an states:

انما المؤمنون الذين امنوا بالله ورسوله ثم لم يرتابوا وجاهدوا باموالهم وانفسهم في سبيل الله اولئك هم الصادقون.¹⁵

Translation: *The (true) believers are those only who believe in Allah and His messenger and afterward doubt not, but strive with their wealth and their lives for the cause of Allah. Such are the sincere.*¹⁶

The Holy Qur'an also emphasizes upon the outstanding quality of the every member of this Ummah, that the love of Allah and the Prophet ﷺ and the passion for service and sacrifice in the cause of Allah should be stronger in their hearts than devotion to the most precious things or persons in their eyes including their own lives, livelihood and livestock. Those who do not struggle to achieve this standard cannot not worthy of Allah's favour and grace. For them there are threats and warnings. The Holy Qur'an states:

قل إن كان آباءكم وأبناؤكم وإخوانكم وأزواجكم وعشيرتكم وأموال اقترفتموها وتجارة تخشون كسادها ومساكن ترضونها أحب إليكم من الله ورسوله وجهاد في سبيله فتربصوا حتى يأتى الله بأمره والله لا يهدي القوم الفاسقين.¹⁷

Translation: *Say: If it be that your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your mates, or your kindred, the wealth that ye have gained, the commerce in which ye fear a decline, or the dwellings in which ye delight are dearer to you than Allah or His apostle or the striving in his cause; then wait until Allah brings about His decision: and Allah guides not the rebellious.*¹⁸

يا أيها الذين آمنوا مالكم إذا قيل لكم انفروا في سبيل الله اثأقنتم إلى الأرض أرضيتم بالحياة الدنيا من الآخرة فما متاع الحياة الدنيا في الآخرة إلا قليل - إلا تنفروا يعذبكم عذاباً أليماً ويستبدل قوماً غيركم ولا تضره شيئا. والله على كل شيء عديد.¹⁹

Translation: *O ye who believe! What is the matter with you then when ye are asked to go forth in the cause of Allah ye cling heavily to the earth? Do ye prefer the life of this world to the hereafter? But little is the comfort of this life as compared with the hereafter. Unless ye go forth He will punish you with a grievous penalty and put others in your place; but Him ye would not harm in the least. For Allah hath power over all things.*²⁰

In the said Ayat, Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ is very fervently incited for *Jihad* and told that forsaking *Jihad* for the worldly fortune and luxuries meant falling from pinnacle of grandeur into the bottomless pit of degradation. There should be no worth of worldly comforts and luxuries in the eyes of a true Believer in comparison with the love of Allah ﷻ, his Messenger ﷺ and the importance of *Akhirat*.

Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ has further been intimated that Allah's work does not depend upon them. If they show lackadaisical attitude to this duty Allah ﷻ will raise other Ummah for the same cause and they would be deprived of the distinctive status.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of the raising up of the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ is 'the Establishment and Propagation of Deen' through 'Da'wah and Tableeg' using appropriate mode in various circumstances. Each and every member of this Ummah is responsible for this task; however, there is a relaxation with a condition that if the chosen members of the Ummah, with right aptitude and ability, actively devote themselves to this responsibility while rest of the Ummah cooperate with them, in such a case the obligation to spent full time, wealth, energy will not remain long upon each and every member of the Ummah. But, on the contrary, if any deficiency or indifference attitude is found in the chosen group then the entire Ummah will be declared defaulter and will have to suffer severe punishment in this world as well as in the hereafter as mentioned in Surah Taubah Ayaat 24 and 38.

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