

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

All praise and thanks to Allah (SWT) who has and continues to give humankind a system of excellence that benefits the holistic human being. Thus, the true believer will always endeavour to continuously develop his taqwa and piety in the way of Allah (SWT).

Brothers and sisters in Islam, It is with stark realization that we find ourselves witnesses and participants in the systematic destruction of the moral fibre of society as a whole. In spite of our natural endowment and resources, most South Africans are still languishing in abject poverty.

This misdirection by way of socio-economic and political circumstances has resulted in a society so dislocated that it has become oblivious to its own destruction. Closer analysis of the circumstances in which we find ourselves and the realization of just how far we have strayed from the system of Islam, lays bare just how alien and unnatural our deeds are to the human essence.

Allah (SWT) says in Surah An –Nahl: 112-113:

“Allah sets forth a parable: ...a town once secure and at ease, with its sustenance coming to it abundantly from all quarters, and which thereupon blasphemously refused to show gratitude for Allah’s blessings;

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا قَرْيَةً كَانَتْ
ءَامِنَةً مُطْمَئِنَّةً يَأْتِيهَا رِزْقُهَا
رَغَدًا مِّن كُلِّ مَكَانٍ فَكَفَرَتْ
بِأَنعَمِ اللَّهِ فَأَذَاقَهَا اللَّهُ لِبَاسَ
الْجُوعِ وَالْخَوْفِ بِمَا كَانُوا
يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

and therefore Allah caused it to taste the all embracing misery of hunger and fear as a result of all that its people had so persistently wrought...”

“...and indeed, there had come unto them an apostle from among themselves- but they denied him; and suffering over whelmed them while they were thus doing wrong [to themselves].”

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْهُمْ
فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَهُمْ
ظَالِمُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾

The word ‘libas’, which literally means garment in ayah 112 is used here to describe the utmost degree of misfortune which ‘envelopes a man like a garment’. The ayaat are meant to illustrate the deliberate ingratitude for the blessings Allah (SWT) bestows upon man- in other words, a deliberate refusal to submit to His guidance- is bound in the long run and in the context of this talk, to have disastrous consequences, inasmuch as no society may expect to live in security and ease unless it conforms to the ethical and social standards inherent in the concept of man’s bond with his Creator- his natural inclination , his fitra (re: surah 2:27).

In his *Ihya’ Ulum ad-din*, Al-Ghazali identifies two types of poverty, namely, real poverty and poverty due to greed. Real poverty implies lack of having basic necessity of life, while poverty due to greed comes as a result of man’s insatiable wants of material wealth.

Man has been created with different capabilities and potentials. These differences eventually lead to unequal earnings and the subsequent differentials in the distribution of accumulated wealth. That this has been the order for all generations of human civilization and history cannot be disputed. The only difference among societies would be in terms of the extent or degree of inequality. What is more disturbing according to Alhabshi (1996) is that if the inequalities persist and widen over a considerable period, it would inevitably lead to absolute poverty rather than relative poverty.

The extent or degree of poverty varies from one community to another and from one place or country to another. Its result has a direct effect not only on the life of the individual but also on the community and on the level of their material progress and civil development, causing over 1 billion people in the world today to live under unacceptable conditions of poverty and around 30,000 people in the world to die every day because they are too poor to stay alive (Dogarawa, 2006). The institution of Zakah not only aims at alleviating the financial hardships of the less privileged in society through the sharing of ones wealth, but also builds a society of higher moral and spiritual values. It checks the baser instincts of greed, miserliness and selfishness that can lead to materialism.

The Nabi Muhammad (SAW) had warned us over 1433 years ago. A saying that echoes across the centuries:

“Quick will be the decline of you, the ummah. It will be like a quick diminishing of a pot of food placed in front of hungry people”

It was asked of the Nabi (SAW): “Will we be small in numbers oh Messenger of Allah (SWT)?”

The Nabi (SAW) replied: “No, but you (ummah) will be like the foam on the water after a storm...”

And Allah says:

قُلْ إِن كُنتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ
 اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ
 وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ
 غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“Say: Allah’s guidance is the only guidance and we have been directed/instructed/commanded to submit to the Rab of existence...”

“And thus to establish regular prayers, and to build ever increasing devoutness and consciousness of Allah, for it is to Allah we shall be gathered.”

وَأَن أَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوْهُ وَهُوَ
 الَّذِي إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ

We have been provided solutions.

It is the institution of zakat as enshrined in the Qur’an and Sunnah.

This manner of Islam brought to us by our Beloved Rasool (SAW) is a mercy to us in that it invites us back to a natural way of life long buried under false ‘libas’.

We have been allowed to partake in an ibada (Ramadan) that has assisted us in recognizing the hypocrisy of the status quo in our society. A society in which the satiation of baser instincts are the order of the day.

What we covert with our hypnotised tunnel vision is a life of materialistic illusion and not a system of truth. This message of Islam is a conduit for true holistic growth for the individual as well as society as a whole.

The solution, the direction to be taken is given to us five times ...daily. This direction in which we prostrate at exact times each day serves as a physical as well as spiritual compass to chart our course through the pitfalls of the social, economic and political storms in which we find ourselves embroiled to the true destination at the next level of existence – the aakhirah.

“Let us assume that a person, having lost his memory, tries to learn about his surroundings anew from a state of *mental infancy*. In learning about his planet he discovers that beneath his feet is a boiling stratum of molten lava prone to erupt at intervals without warning; that his world is simply a speck in a vast universe that is constantly expanding, and that meteors and comets would hurtle toward the earth threatening to eradicate all life save set orbits and trajectories.

Surely, he would not be able to for a minute forget his tentative existence, and that were it not for Allah’s will, he would not exist.”

“Salah indeed prevents a person from shameful and reprehensible deeds”. – 29:45

“Indeed you were heedless of this. Now we have removed from you, your covering, and sharp is your sight this day”. - Surah Qaf: 22

“This fact cannot be denied that your wealth and progeny are a means of test and trial for you. But in the presence of Allah is the highest reward”. – 64:15

Each day your heart beats around 100.000 times, sending 7570 litres of blood surging through your body. Although it’s no bigger than your fist, your heart has the mighty job of keeping blood flowing through the 96.000 km of blood vessels that feed your organs and tissues. Your heart is able to determine the exact amount of blood required to the certain body part by increasing or decreasing the pump rate.

And how do you ask do we keep our hearts in tip top shape so that it may continue functioning at an optimal level? You make it work regularly. The more you exercise it, the better it functions. What happens if we fail to do so? – the inevitable heart attack brought on by in some cases high cholesterol. An all too common problem today. Why?

It is because we overindulge in that which is harmful. We are so afraid of not getting enough. In not having enough. So much so that *having* becomes our primary focus. Hunger has turned to gluttony in all respects.

The same is true for our spiritual well being. Keeping the heart, that is the institution of zakah, pumping effectively – all the while oxygenating the essential organs -is essential for our holistic growth. Failing to do so will inevitably lead to the clogging of the arteries of society – disparity between classes, crime and abject poverty.

History has shown that when societies get too unequal bad things happen. They either become economically inefficient or they become subject to social unrest. In many cases both happen simultaneously.

When will we awake to the realities? When will the scales fall from our eyes?

May Allah (SWT) with our efforts, protect us and allow us to attain success insha-allah and to recognise that true way forward.

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