

The Responsibility of the Ulema

Q: Ilm-52: What are the responsibilities of the Ulema? Please give a brief reply.

Answer: The Madrassahs of Islaam are the fortresses of Islaam and it is only through Islaamic education that the correct Islaamic beliefs can be imparted. A person can lead a proper Islaamic lifestyle only through Islaamic knowledge because only this can correct all his personal and social interactions. The virtues and importance of Deeni knowledge is more apparent than the sun. It is for this reason that the students acquiring the knowledge of Deen in the Madrassahs and all those teaching and carrying out administrative duties in these institutions are most fortunate and worthy of congratulations. All of creation prays for them and the angels actually spread their wings beneath the feet of such students. Such students are truly the guests of Rasulullaah SAW. and the teachers are worthy of tremendous respect.

However, it is also evident that everyone does not have the opportunity to study in such institutions. Since there is a great proportion of the Ummah outside the Daarul Uloom and Madrassahs, it is necessary to arrange for their self-reformation and education as well. Whose responsibility is this? Furthermore, there are many non-Muslims who have to be invited to Islaam. Whose responsibility is this? The straight answer to this is the Ulema. Because the Ulema are the heirs of the Ambiyaa ALY. they are obliged to impart the Deen to the masses outside the Madrassahs just as they are doing within the walls of the Madrassahs. They may employ whatever means at their disposal to make people aware of the injunctions of the Deen and create within their hearts true love for the Deen of Islaam and the Shari'ah. It is therefore necessary for the Ulema to lend their shoulders to the wheels of Tabligh and to delivering lectures.

It is desired of those in charge of the Madrassahs to allow the Ulema to travel to participate in such activities and to do so with happiness so that the Ulema are never hampered in the dissemination of their knowledge. In fact, their salaries should not be cut for these periods of absence.

Hakeemul Ummah Hadhrat Moulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi RAH. says: "Because the Ulema have forsaken the work of the Ambiyaa ALY. we find more ignorant lecturers. Few Ulema deliver lectures, because of which the true objectives cannot be attained. They have taken up one of the wings (teaching in the Madrassahs), but have left out the other wing of educating the general public."

If the Ulema will not educate the people, will the ignorant people do it? Should this happen. then that will happen which the Hadith speaks about when it says, "They will take ignoramus as leaders, who are themselves misled and will mislead others as well." Ulema should therefore deliver talks and not worry whether these are effective or not or whether people are taking heed or not.

Imaam Ghazaali RAH. writes, "Note the fact that during these times we are negligent of

encouraging people to carry out any small or big deed and to learn or propagate the same. We are therefore sinful because most city-dwellers are unaware of the injunctions of salaah. If this is the condition of the city-dwellers, what about the people in the rural areas? It is therefore necessary for every Masjid and locality to have an Aalim, just as it is necessary for every village to have one. If an Aalim has completed his Fardh Ayn duties and is able to fulfill the Fardh Kifaayah duties as well, he must travel to surrounding areas to teach others the injunctions of Deen. He must take his own food along so that he will not be doubted. If this does not happen, the Aalim and non-Ulema will be taken to task; the Aalim for not going and the non-Aalim for being lazy. Those people who know the injunctions of salaah must teach them to those who do not know them, otherwise they will also be sinful ...

It is the duty of the Ulema to pass on whatever has reached them from Rasulullaah SAW. because of which they are the heirs of the Ambiyaa ALY.

Sheikhul Islaam Hadhrat Moulana Musayn Ahmad Madani RAH. says, "I have heard that there are some board members who have misgivings about paying salaries to such teachers (who need leave to deliver lectures or to go out in Tabligh). The institutions of Deen have been erected not only for imparting formal Deeni education but also for serving the religious and other needs of the Muslim community. It is for this reason that Hadhrat Nanotwi RAH. went on a fund-raising campaign during his lessons and managed to raise a large amount of funds to send to the Turks when they were fighting the western powers. The Daarul Uloom in Deoband was closed during this period and he still received his salary."

Hadhrat Moulana also goes on to mention incidents of Ulema in institutions engaging in combating other challenges of the time during the time when they were giving lessons. Had their salaries been cut and their families been harmed in the process, it would have been a severe setback for the Muslim community as a whole. They have always also taken part in debates and various types of gatherings throughout the ages.

We therefore learn that whenever any important Deeni gathering is to take place which concerns the reformation of the masses and the protection of the Shari'ah, the principal of the Deeni institutions and the other members of administration should permit worthy Ulema to attend. If they fear any harm coming to the education of the student, they should employ some extra staff to fill in for those that need to be away.

With the grace of Allaah, the Tablighi Jamaa'ah is now international and doing an impeccable service to Deen. People are starting to make sacrifices for the Deen because of this effort and countless numbers of people have changed their lives. Ulema need to participate in this effort because it is essentially the work of the Ulema. Their participation will strengthen the effort and will allow the effort to continue within the framework of the Shari'ah. It is in fact only the Ulema who can really take charge of such a great effort. The principal of the Deeni institutions and the other members of administration should therefore devise methods of allowing their Ulema staff to participate in this as well.

Hadhrat Moulana Muhammad Ilyas RAH. said, "It was the general condition of the Ummahs of the former Ambiyaa ALY. that, as they moved away from the times of their Ambiyaa ALY. their

religious acts (worships etc.) used to take the shape of mere customs and become empty of spirit and reality and performance of these acts meant nothing but celebrations of established customs. Then, some other Ambiyaa ALY. were sent to these Ummahs for the correction of this deviation and waywardness. While removing these customary aspects, these Ambiyaa ALY. used to introduce the realities of religious acts and the actual spirit of Shari'ah to the people. When, in the end, Rasulullaah SAW. announced his prophethood, such was the condition of all the nations at that time who had any relationship with some revealed religion. Even if some part of the Shari'ah brought by their respective Nabi SAW. was present in them, its condition was no more than a collection of spiritless customs. Yet these people considered those customs as the real Deen and Shari'ah. Rasulullaah SAW. then removed these customs and taught the real religious truths and commands."

"The Ummah of Hadhrat Muhammad SAW. is also suffering from this very disease right now and its worships also reflect this customary trend. This error has grown to such proportions that even the teaching of Deen, which should have been the means of correcting all faults of this kind, has also become a mere custom in many places.

However, since the succession of the Ambiyaa ALY. has been ended. the responsibility of such missions has been placed on the Ulema of the Ummah because of their being the representatives of Rasulullaah SAW. They are therefore the ones who are responsible to pay special attention towards correcting this deviation and corruption. The means for this correction is the 'correction of intentions'. This is so because conventionality comes into the deeds only when the sincerity to do an act solely for Allaah and the marks of true obedience start disappearing from the deeds. With this correction of intentions, the direction of deeds gets turned towards Allaah and reality comes into them in place of customariness. Every deed is then performed solely with the true sense of Allaah's worship and obedience. In short, creating sincerity and reality in religious practices by making people attentive to correct their intentions is a very special responsibility of the Ulema of the Ummah and the carriers of Deen."

It is also reported in the same book: "One day after Fajr salaah, the Masjid of Nizaamuddeen was full off people and the workers of the Tablighi movement were present in a great numbers. Hadhrat Moulana was so weak that he found it difficult to utter loudly even a few words. However, lying in his bed, he called for one of his special attendants and conveyed this message to the entire gathering through him: 'All your moving in this path and all your struggles will remain useless if, together with this effort, you did not manage to learn the knowledge of Deen and camT out the Dhikr of Allaah. (In other words, Ilm and Dhikr are two wings; one without both these wings cannot fly long in the environment of Tableegh.) There is, in fact, a great danger that if these two things are overlooked, this work (may it never be so) may turn into a new door of waywardness and mischief.

He then told about the status and the true nature of Ilm and Dhikr. He said, 'If there does not exist the knowledge of Deen, then Imaan and Islaam will exist only in name and as a formality; and if knowledge exists, but without the Dhikr of Allaah, then it is a complete darkness (a big evil). In the like manner, the Dhikr of Allaah- if even in excess - is very dangerous if it is without the knowledge of Deen. In short, it is through Dhikr that Noor (divine light) comes into

knowledge, and without knowledge the real fruits and blessings of Dhikr cannot be achieved; rather, in most cases, Shaytaan makes such ignorant Sufis his instruments. So the importance of knowledge and Dhikr should never be underestimated in this work but should always be given special attention. Otherwise, this Tableeghi Movement of yours will also become a mere wandering and (Allaah forbid), you will suffer heavy losses."

(Hadrath Moulana's objective with this advice was that those making effort in this path of Da'wat and Tableegh should not, as has become the present-day trend, consider their struggle; journeys and selfless sacrifices to be the actual work. They should rather regard teaching and learning of the knowledge of Deen and making the habit of remaining constantly in the state of Allah's Dhikr and making a connection with Him as the chief things to be aimed at. In other words, they are required not to become merely 'soldiers' and preachers, but to become the 'seekers and students of Deen' and the 'doers of Allaah's Dhikr' as well).

May Allaah safeguard the Deen of Islaam and the Muslims and grant us all the ability to keep every branch of the Deen alive with sincerity. May He also grant us the true concern for the Deen and Muslims. Aameen. And Allaah knows best what is most correct.

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