بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

Generating Atmospheres
within the Muslim Community in the West

In recent times we have seen the acceleration of efforts of the Western nations to assimilate Muslims. The death of multiculturalism, open calls from politicians for a Western version of Islam and the narrative of countering non-violent extremism has prompted many pertinent questions raised by carriers of the Islamic Da'wah such as:

- How do we counter the resilient campaign within an ideological nation to assimilate Muslims?

- Whilst the potential exists to influence and culture Muslim individuals who will not assimilate and will hold onto the Islamic ideas about life, is it feasible to generate an alternative atmosphere within Muslim communities that oppose the strong public opinion that dominates society founded on the fundamental ideas of capitalism?

- What are the prerequisites required to achieving tangible results in this domain? What are the necessary actions and core elements needed to achieve this?

In order to answer these questions it requires us to have a clear understanding of: what society is composed of; the reality of an ideological society; the components of a community; the difference between a society and a community; the meaning of an atmosphere; the reality of alternative atmospheres opposed to the dominant thoughts and sentiments of society; how atmospheres are generated and preserved.

Society

Allah (swt) has endowed the human being with the instinct of survival. One of the features of this instinct is for people to gather and live together, and thus the coexistence and interaction of people is a natural human disposition.

However, a person plus another person, plus another person would form a group. If a permanent relationship between them were to be established, they would become a society, regardless of their numbers. So a thousand people on a ship in the Atlantic Ocean would not be defined as a society. Nor would the three million Hujjaj who travel to perform Hajj every year to the noble city of Makkah be defined as society as they are just travelers who do not permanently reside thus their relationships are temporary.

The crux of understanding society is to comprehend the nature of permanent relationships. What establishes relationships between people is the interest for which each one of them embarks upon securing, whether this interest is related to the securing of a benefit or the repulsion of a harm.

Examples of these interests could be basic interests such as the need for food, clothing and shelter but also includes the wider interests such as the need for law and order and an authority or government. In summary, all human relationships are based on securing these interests. We can categorise and classify these by their distinct types such as:

- **Economic Interests:** such as the relationship in trade between the buyer and the seller, the employer and the employee, the landlord and the tenant.

- **Social Interests:** relationships between men and women including married, non-married, family relations and those outside the family such as neighbours and work colleagues.

- **Political Interests:** between the ruling authority and the citizens of a state, this includes the relationship with the police, state institutions, local government and civil servants.

These relationships need thoughts and ideas to govern them, otherwise there would be chaos. For example, in trade, there needs to be a thought that regulates the relationship between the buyer and the seller. If one was to simply walk out of a shop carrying an item without having paid for it or taken any agreement to do so, it would usually be deemed as shoplifting and not

trade. In every society men in public do not behave towards women in any way they choose or please rather, there are thoughts that govern this relationship. The same is true with political relationships between the people and those in authority.

As human beings we are not robots as thoughts naturally lead to sentiments, so a woman walking in public wearing a mini-skirt in Makkah would be shunned, whereas in London or Paris this may be praised by the general public. Usually the governing system would be established upon a set of thoughts and sentiments which would also regulate relationships according to them. So the woman in the West is permitted by law to dress in a mini skirt within the public domain whereas the same act is forbidden by law to do so in Saudi Arabia.

The difference between ideological and non-ideological societies

The relationships amongst people would not result in a homogenous society such as the Western societies today or the Islamic society established by the Messenger of Allah (saw) in the past unless three prerequisites were achieved:

A common outlook towards these relationships achieved through:

1. Unity of thought.

2. Unity in approval and disapproval towards these relationships achieved through unity of emotions and sentiments.

3. A unified system addressing their problems.

Therefore, although Yathrib (Madinah) prior to the Hijrah was one location, the Jews had a separate society to the Aus, Khazraj and other *Mushrikeen* as their relationships were governed by their own thoughts, sentiments and system.

In this regard there is a clear difference between ideological societies such as those of the West and the non-ideological societies of the Muslim world today. Today in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey or any other country in the Muslim world, the majority of people are Muslims, yet there exists a plethora of conflicting thoughts and emotions in society and in most of our countries the system is imposed upon the people by force.

The societies of the West have held with conviction the core ideas at the heart of capitalism, secularism, freedom and democracy for centuries. They experienced bitter feudal systems sanctioned by the Church and eventually settled upon relegating religion to the personal domain justified on the famous quote from the gospel, "*Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's*" For example, if you were to poll ten random people from varying sectors of society from a bus driver, to a professor and a politician about their views on whether religion should interfere in politics - you would receive a unified response. If you were to ask the same question in the Muslim world, you are likely to get varying answers depending upon who you ask. Thus it is natural for those within western societies to see Islam and those who adhere to it as alien as Islam is fundamentally non-secular by its very nature.

These dominant thoughts and sentiments have a powerful effect on all individuals in society such that usually the majority would eventually begin to hold these ideas as their own and those who did not are under pressure not to speak or act against them publically. This is why only a few would do so and consequently receive wide criticism for their views.

What is Public Opinion?

When an opinion is expressed openly within society it has the potential to be a public opinion. What is important to note here is that opinions expressed in private are not considered. Public opinion is more transitory and fickle than dominant thoughts.

When an opinion is repeatedly and consistently expressed within the public domain it has the potential to gain prominence. It is noted that governments in general fear public opinion and invest a great deal of attention and time monitoring it; they value public opinion highly and realise its effect.

In times of war and disturbances, the control of public opinion becomes all the more significant, and governments move swiftly to quell any public opinion against them. This can be seen during all major wars in the last century whether the World Wars, the Vietnam War or the Gulf wars. In times of peace their control of public opinion becomes more relaxed; however if they felt that some concepts which may damage their credibility were being spread they move quickly to dampen them and to prevent provoking a public opinion against them.

When the Messenger of Allah (saw) was sent, the Quraysh did not budge at first, however when they sensed that his (saw) Message threatened to turn into a public opinion, they soon moved to resist it and prevent it from transitioning into a public opinion. Therefore, almost as a rule, every government tends to fight any concept or opinion or news item that could potentially turn into a public opinion against it.

In an ideological society we can further categorise the types of public opinion:

1. Those that are based upon or conform to the general awareness of the ideology, for the West this is Capitalism.

2. Those that oppose this ideology.

Within the first category a whole array of public opinions exist which have varying strengths. Some become prominent and others fade as the expression of their voice is diminished or if the foundation upon which they are based is exposed. So, in the past we have seen varying trends in the public opinion of western countries where the opinion for maintaining the nationalisation of public utilities such as gas and electricity was strong at one time and was part of the manifesto of various left wing parties such as the British Labour Party. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the weakening of socialism, the tide of opinion changed and the Labour party abandoned this policy known as Clause IV of the 1918 constitution of the party. After 9/11, the public opinion in some European countries, despite some scepticism was manipulated to support the sending of troops for war in Iraq, following the long drawn out conflict and the increasing casualties, this opinion changed over time.

These opinions although they may vary do not fundamentally challenge the foundation upon which the society is built and thus are tolerated and the mediums by which they are expressed are also open including the national press, television, radio, public events and even the parliament or equivalent.

Opinions that are publically expressed that oppose the ideology are vehemently opposed by multiple means and even if they do have some reach are often drowned out unless there is a consistent effort backed by resources that continues to promote them. For example, in the wider society following the Charlie Hebdo episode when Muslims highlighted the double standards related to freedom of speech, we saw the reaction of the media, public and politicians.

In the non-ideological Muslim world to change the public opinion is relatively easier.

Firstly, as the Aqeedah of people is Islam, although the common thoughts and emotions in society are often a mix of Islamic, democratic, secular and nationalistic. When the Da'wah carriers take an issue such as the rise in gas prices in Pakistan or the water problem in Jordan, the alliance of the regimes with America or the economic enslavement to the western powers, by repeatedly raising these issues in the public places whether through public talks, demonstrations, distribution of leaflets, articles in the press, discussions in the markets, universities and cafes etc - even with a relatively small group they are able to affect public opinion. As they are not opposed to the ideology of the people, rather we are linking these matters to their Aqeedah removing the ambiguity and dust from it. So although they are opposed to the corrupt government they are not opposed to the creed of the people.

Secondly, the people in Muslim societies of the third world are less comfortable as they face more direct problems, instability, poverty and oppression. Therefore, the desire for change there is also stronger.

In fact it is a key part of the Islamic methodology for change to continuously adopt the interests of the people and expose the plans of the colonialists by intellectual and political struggle. The aim of this is not only to generate and maintain a particular public opinion; rather it

is to make this based upon awareness of key Islamic concepts such as unity, Khilafah and Jihad *fee-sabeelillah.*

What is a community?

When talking about a community such as the Muslim community within a host society it is necessary to define and understand its reality.

By studying Muslims or other groups who have permanently settled in the West and are called communities we can determine the following components:

1. Individuals who live permanently in the same physical locality such as within the cities of London, Sydney or Chicago.

2. Who share a common set of thoughts specific to them such as the Islamic belief.

3. Living in a host society.

What is an atmosphere?

An atmosphere can exist when a thought or set of thoughts are repeatedly expressed and applied in a particular reality such as a football match, university, masjid or Islamic group.

An atmosphere can be sensed by those who interact with it and can affect those who are exposed to it. For example in a masjid where men and women are segregated even though it is not against the law for the woman to go into the men's section, generally even liberal minded women will generally conform.

It is similar to public opinion but on a micro level. Another example may be a mosque where political discussions are shunned in the mosque such that there are even signs up saying 'don't talk about worldly affairs', this atmosphere can be sensed by those that interact with it. Many would conform to it, it would take someone conviction in an alternative thought to oppose it such as the Da'wah carriers who explain that not only is politics part of Islam rather even the Islamic creed is political, they may initially be strongly opposed in such an environment.

Building and maintaining alternative atmospheres within the Muslim community in the West

Although there are permanently settled Muslims which we call a Muslim community, in real terms there are a multiplicity of Muslim communities within western countries with differing atmospheres.

The society we live in is a homogenous Capitalist society, however the Muslim community within it exists in pockets scattered throughout the country in various cities and localities each with their own varying atmospheres. So you may live within a particular community and attend a particular mosque with a particular atmosphere of 'no worldly discussions' but around the corner from you there is a Muslim community with their own Islamic centre which has a highly politically charged atmosphere.

1. The common thoughts and emotions in this society and the public opinion have a major affect on all communities and atmospheres.

When you are within your local community, local mosque or halal butcher there is a certain link to the Islamic bond of brotherhood. However, everyone interacts with the wider society and is exposed to the thoughts of secularism, freedom, pluralism and democracy that permeate the society through various mediums including the media, education, state institutions and even entertainment.

Da'wah carriers need to be realistic in their expectation of the extent that we will be able to be successful in making the atmospheres within our communities oppose the western thoughts of freedom, democracy, pluralism and democracy and dominated by the concepts of: being intimately linked with the issues facing the Muslim Ummah worldwide; opposing neo-colonialist plans in the Muslim world; adhering to the Shari'ah rules in all matters whether worships, personal, economic, social or political; the Khilafah and the systems of Islam.

2. To significantly impact an atmosphere of a particular local Muslim community would require the following:

- Actual presence of active Islamic Da'wah carriers in that community who carry Islam ideologically. Therefore, to be successful in a Muslim population numbering in millions then in reality the Da'wah carriers would need to have an actual presence throughout the numerous Muslim communities around that country. It is true that some activities would affect the communities at large such as the promotion of the correct Islamic concepts in the media. If they were able to secure a TV channel of their own or a medium that gained mass popularity such as a magazine or radio station in that case they more easily affect atmospheres nationally. This is difficult to achieve in western societies due to the increased regulations placed on television and radio programs. Promotion through social media, online mediums and the written word is more feasible

- An ability to consistently publically challenge incorrect thoughts within the public domain, such as support of secular political and refuting the modernist mantra that Islam doesn't have a detailed political system. For Da'wah carriers to impact a public atmosphere the challenge must be public and not private. Consistency is also important; a one off talk or event would not be enough to produce any sustainable change as Kufr thoughts are constantly hammered into people through all mediums. For a significant intellectual clash to take place within the atmosphere there needs to be a consistency in the clash such that the strongest thought rises to the top.

- As the clash of ideas needs to be public within the atmosphere, the ability to use the public mediums would be useful such as the public khutbahs, talks, literature, local media etc. However, given the current climate in the West this space is likely to decrease. So if the Da'wah carriers were to target this they would need to utilise increasingly creative public styles.

3. For the Da'wah to be effective in this realm there are a number of dependencies as it requires grass roots work:

- Strength in that particular community both in terms of numbers and strong cultured Da'wah carriers who can publically articulate the call with frankness, courage, strength and thought.
- A wide reach within the atmospheres where Muslims interact in that community including the schools, colleges, cafes, mosques and other public places.
- The correct thoughts would be drowned out and in reality many times are unless they are able to present them persistently through multiple public mediums. This cannot be achieved unless the popular base of the Da'wah is large i.e. the number of its activists and its supporters who are consistently publically engaging in the atmosphere.
- Undertake strong collective culturing public activities based upon the pure Islamic culture exposing the corrupt thoughts and explaining the Islamic thoughts and rules.
- Publically challenging corrupt thoughts whenever they arise whether this is from Imams, councillors, activists or influential figures.

There are a number of facilitating factors that would aid this:

- Having a growing base of Da'wah carriers - where the Da'wah is consistently winning more to its ranks than losing.
- Strongly consistent concentrated culturing activities that would assist in their development in order to have strong personalities to carry the call.
- A growing supporter base who actually express thoughts built upon an ideological understanding of Islam publically.
- Winning over influential personalities to the Da'wah who become mouthpieces for it.
- Promoting these thoughts through the existing media where possible

- Influencing the call of others who speak publically amongst the community such as the Ulema, activists and groups.

It is like the difference between an aerial war and a land war, the Kuffar have the means at their disposal to win the aerial war in terms of promoting their corrupt ideas to Muslims. However, it is difficult for them to operate on the ground and to win the battle of hearts and minds at that level - whereas Islamic political parties have this ability.

Key dependency - growing a healthy body of Islamic Da'wah carriers

A key dependency to achieve the aim of countering assimilation in the Muslim community or for working to re-establish the Khilafah is growing a healthy body of Islamic personalities to carry the call. If presence on the ground is thin and in some cases non-existent then the thoughts of the Da'wah is a drop in the ocean of public opinion and are drowned by it.

Therefore, it is fundamental to the success of the work that there is consistent winning of new people who a cultured strongly so that they become a fire that scorches the false thoughts and a beacon of light that spreads the Da'wah.

This work is not a specific work that should only be undertaken by some of the body of an Islamic group rather it is the work of all its members and affiliates. It is different to delivering talks, circles, khutbahs and debates – these should not be a duty upon every member as people have varied abilities in this regard.

The vital issue of Khilafah, its evidences, the method to establish it, the refutation of other methods and the obligation of working with a group should be the daily bread of the Da'wah carriers as it is the vital issue, a matter of life and death that is key to convincing Muslims to work for it and to join the global struggle against Western hegemony.

Allah (swt) did not leave human beings to determine the priorities amongst actions by themselves based upon their own minds or criterion.

He (swt) predetermined a value of raising one's children to be Islamic personalities. However, He (swt) gave the acts of Jihad a bigger value. He (swt) predetermined a value to the providing for one's dependants, and He (swt) placed a higher value on the repelling of the enemy from Muslim land. He (swt) placed a value on the building of mosques, but He placed a higher value on carrying the Da'wah to resume Islam through the establishment of Khilafah. Allah (swt) says:

﴿أَجَعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ آمَنَ بِاللهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ وَجَاهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللهِ لاَ يَسْتَوُونَ عِنْدَ اللهِ وَاللّهُ لاَ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾

"Do you consider the providing of water to the pilgrims and the maintenance of Masjid al Haram as equal to the worth of those who believe in Allah and the last day, and strive hard and fight in the cause of Allah? They are not equal before Allah. And Allah guides not the Zalimun (Oppressors)" [9:19]

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