

RIGHT WAYS OF PROPAGATING THE TRUTH

Tabligh (T)

Islam is a missionary religion. It is not restricted, unlike many other faiths, to any particular people. It has permitted none to claim as chosen people of God and men of distinction.

The Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) upon whom the religion was revealed, was sent as a blessing not for the Arabs alone but for all the worlds.

"And We have not sent you except as a blessing  
for the worlds" (Anbiya v. 107)

Again the Prophet was commanded by Allah to declare:

"Say: O people I surely I am the Apostle of Allah to you all"  
(A'araf v.158)

Thus if the Prophet was sent for all the worlds that have been created and his message was meant for one and all the people, there can be no restriction nor any discrimination in the work of propagating the truth.

On the right and effective way of propagating Islam, the holy Qura'n has this guidance to provide:

"Call people to the path of your Lord with wisdom and mild  
exhortation. Reason with them in the most courteous manner"  
(Al Nahl v.125)

Martyr Murtaza Mutahhari in one of his discourses had lucidly explained the interpretation. He said that by consensus of the commentators of the Qura'n, three different ways of calling and guiding people are highlighted in this ayat, each one of which has a special application of its own.

The ayat commands the Prophet to call people to the path of the Lord. Wherever the word (Rabb) Lord is used, there is an inference upon teaching and upbringing, and this true of the present context. Thus: call the people to the path of your Lord, the path which the people must follow if they are to be trained and refined. By what means? By the means of hikmah (wisdom). Hikmah is firm and sound speech that does not lend itself to misinterpretation and doubt.

Thus: call the people to the path of your Lord through logic, wisdom and knowledge and reasoning which are indisputable. In the view of commentators, this way of calling and guiding is appropriate only for those who have the aptitude and capacity for it.

But some people lack the capacity for reasoned, intellectual explanations whenever an intellectual problem is brought before them, they become confused. Such people can be guided through 'mild exhortation' (as is mentioned in the foregoing ayat) by advice, examples, stories, parables and whatever else affects their hearts.



While wisdom and reasoning address the 'mind', exhortation and advice address the 'heart'. Most people are at the level of the heart and emotions rather than at the level of the mind, reason and thought.

There are also times when we will be faced by those whose interest is not discovering the truth, not in understanding the truth but in arguing the point and criticizing. On such occasions, we must argue and dispute with them but this has to be done by the best means. There should be no unfairness, no partiality no lies. "Reason with them in the most courteous manner".

Thus the above Qura'nic ayat mentions three different ways of guiding each one of which applies to a different set of circumstances. We can see that the means to be employed in guidance are varied and not always one and the same.

Again the personal character and behaviour of those engaged in the missionary work bears considerable influence. The Prophet (s.a.w) was not commanded by Allah to proclaim Islam until he had reached the age of forty. Why was this? It was for reason to give ample time to the ignorant and stubborn people of Arabia to witness and be impressed by his profound and sublime character. So honestly and truthfully did the Prophet behave with one and all that he popularly came to be known and called as 'Al-Sadiq' - the truthful and 'Al Amin' - the trustworthy. Thus it was his impeccable character which easily persuaded the most difficult people to change and accept the truth of Islam.

The mild and considerate ways of approach and response to calls for assistance by those involved in day today missionary work is also of utmost importance. The right and prompt response to the calls for guidance and assistance plays much part in winning over more and more people on the path of truth.

What is important is to be aware of and employ Islamic courtesies. The same way as Islam has made it incumbent upon us to respond to salutation by fellow-Muslims, it is also incumbent upon us to extend the courtesy of responding to letters. Imam Jaffer Al-Sadiq A.S. had said:

"JAWABOL KITAB WAJIB KAWOJOBI RADDOL SSALAM"

Again in dealing and discussing problems, mutual tolerance and understanding in place of stubborn attitude and ill-temper, sharing of responsibilities and appreciation of even small services rendered go a long way to successful accomplishment of the noble aims and object of propagating the truth.

Let the exemplary life of the Holy Prophet be our best guide.