

Doomsday knocking at the door

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Introduction

Media worldwide has been covering the news of the volcanic ash spewing forth from the Iceland's *Eyjaflallajokull* glacier. The volcanic ash forced the country's main airport to shut down. The airspace closure is said to have created the worst breakdown in civil aviation in Europe since World War Two. More than 100,000 flights were canceled and airlines are on track to lose over two billion dollars.

The cloud, floating miles (kilometers) above Earth and capable of knocking out jet engines, wrecked travel plans for tens of thousands of people, from tourists and business travelers to politicians and royals. Passengers stared forlornly at departure boards on which every flight was listed as canceled. The order of things was greatly jeopardised at a place which is considered to be the hub of modern development.

Here I am reminded of an assertion that a co-passenger once made while we were aboard a flight. He proudly said that a flight was actually a *flying palace*. Today, it is terrifying to see the entire machinery supporting these aircrafts and the 'flying palaces' themselves coming to a standstill. As the ash plume drifts between 20,000 feet and 36,000 feet (6,000 meters and 11,000 meters), it can get sucked into airplane engines and cause them to shut down. The smoke and ash also could affect aircraft visibility.

Prediction in the Hadith

The seriousness of this event is heightened because its prediction exists both in the Quran and Hadith. A verse in the Quran states:

Watch out for the day when the sky brings forth plainly visible clouds of smoke (dukhaan). That will envelope the people. This will be a painful punishment. (44:10)

The images that have been shared by the media depict a shocking scene of hot gases melting the thick ice, sending cascades of water thundering down the steep slopes of the volcano. The traditions in the Hadith lay down at least ten signs that would precede the doomsday. As per my study on the subject, the final sign (just before the trumpet is blown) would be that sun would rise in the west and set in the east, i.e. the axial rotation of earth would change. This is a very dangerous matter because Hadith states that when this would happen:

“Then the gates of pardon will be closed.” (Musnad Ahmad, 9376)

The closing of the gates of pardon means that pardon shall no more be acceptable before God because the veil between man and God would no longer be there.

According to my study, emergence of *dukhan* is last but one sign. Final sign would be the blowing of the trumpet, which would succeed the change in axial rotation of the Earth. This is a very critical matter as it means that whatever Muslims had been waiting for has already come to pass.

The Agenda of God

I once visited a Muslim conference where all *ulema* had different agendas to propagate. Dismayed at the state of affairs, I had said that *soon a time shall come when all of you shall forget your personal agendas. In other words, if suddenly you get to know that a black snake has emerged in this gathering; all agendas shall unify into one of ensuring safety from the snake.*

As we witness such events that have been clearly alluded to in the Quran and Hadith, it is time we give up our individual agendas and take up the agenda of God.

The agenda of God is that man prepares himself for paradise. In the present world, more often than not, people possess a nonchalant view of life. They live in enjoyment culture and are least concerned about facing God. While some think that they shall get paradise in lieu of the goodness of their mentor, some others think that their birth in a particular community has already ensured their place in paradise.

I once visited a *Khanqah* whose *amir* had passed away. As I asked his disciples to share a learning, one of them told me of the final advice that the *amir* gave them. Just before he died, the *amir* had said,

“Abhi to apna mamla chal raha hai. Aur mera mamla agar teh ho gaya, to ek bhi peeche nahin rahne ka.”

These are the kinds of stories that people believe in. Such belief tantamounts to sheer underestimation of God's paradise.

Paradisiacal Personality

God wants man to inhabit the perfect world of paradise. But only those who shall prove themselves as possessing a paradisiacal personality during the pre-death period would be selected to inhabit the world of paradise.

Paradise is the refined colony of God, which is evil-free. It is devoid of negative thinking, hatred, anger, violence and all other evil deeds. Only those shall find entry into paradise, who consciously manage their negative thoughts.

The process of selection can be best understood by the following example. An acquaintance who resided in New Delhi was the professor of international relations. He had applied for the post of a professor in a University of America and got a call for an interview. Upon reaching the Airport, he was received by a person who had been sent by the University. This man arranged for the accommodation of the Professor and later showed him around the university. He took him to classroom, dining room, library, playground etc. This went on for almost 7 days. Not having heard from the University about the interview, the Indian Professor grew restless. He decided to meet the Chairman of the University and seek an explanation as to why there was no interview. The Chairman told the Professor that his interview had already taken place and he had been selected to join the University. The Chairman explained that the person who was with the Professor all through was actually his assessor and was carefully observing his potential to adjust to the University culture. And since he had found him fit for the university culture, he had been selected.

This is exactly the case with man. While he is in this world, angels are recording every action of man. Right or wrong, angels shall put down their observations as they are in man's record. While the Professor was not told that he was being watched, man has been told so. The Quran says,

"Each word he utters shall be noted down by a vigilant guardian."(50:18)

If we remain cognizant of this reality, humbleness shall become a part of our lives and will be reflected in all our actions as we shall remember that an arrogant walk or an unconsidered word can lead man to eternal damnation.

Signs of the Doomsday

Hadith records several signs, appearance of which would indicate the onset of doom (Abu Dawud).

According to a tradition, as the doom would approach near, the water level would decrease. (*Al-Mauja-mul-Kabeer, Tabrani, 19883*). This is exactly the case today. Water crisis is one of the most glaring problems that has been staring at us and is becoming more and more piercing day by day. The major aspects of the water crisis are overall scarcity of usable water and water pollution.

According to another tradition, doomsday would be preceded by an increase in the heat on the Earth (*Abu Dawud, 3757*). This prediction has come to pass in the form of global warming. The average facade temperature of the globe has augmented more than 1 degree Fahrenheit since 1900 and the speed of warming has been almost three folds the century long average since 1970. This increase in earth's average temperature is called Global warming.

A tradition states that the fragile animals will be the first to die as the doomsday would approach near (*Shaibul-Imaan-lil Baihaqi, 9777*). Studies show that the world biodiversity has declined by almost one third in the past 35 years and some scientists see the loss of plants, animals and insects as the start of the sixth great species wipe out in the Earth's history.

Yet another tradition predicted that honesty will no longer remain in the world (*Al-Bukhari, 6015*) and brazenness and immodesty will increase like never before. (*Al-Mauja-mul-Kabeer, Tabrani, 8507*) As we witness the world around us, all this has actually transpired.

To my understanding the case has reached the verge of last but one. The time now is to seek forgiveness from God. History has brought us to the beginning of the end and today we are standing on the verge of the end.

The scientists, geologists are predicting that the effects of this ash will not be gone soon. Grave concerns have been raised by the spectre of the eruption, partly because of its association with the more active Katla volcano, which lies under the ice cap immediately

to the east. An eruption of Katla might conceivably cause more problems than have yet been experienced.

The Quran says of a time when the hour of doom would arrive and man would have no place to flee, he would call out to God saying,

“Where can I escape? (75:10)

Despite the high hopes that man had from space exploration endeavours, he has not been able to find another Earth for himself and if situation remains as is, he will be compelled to say, where should he go from here?

The fate of man after death

According to a tradition in the Hadith, the effects of man's deeds in the present world begin to transpire soon after he dies. The Hadith states that,

“The grave is either a garden from amongst the gardens of paradise or a crater from amongst the craters of hell” (Al-Mauja-mul-Kabeer, Tabrani, 1205)

This means that soon after he dies, man will either be in the vicinity of paradise or hell.

Another Hadith says that,

He who dies reaches his hour of judgement (Jiski maut vaqaye hoh gai, uski qayamat qayam ho gayi) (Mirqat-ul-Mafate-Shar-hum-Mishkat-ul-Masabeh)

The blessings of God

A verse in the Quran states that:

God would never withdraw a favour (niyyamat) that He had conferred upon a people. (8:53)

As I read this verse, I felt as if God was narrating His Sunnah in this verse. That is, God does not take back the blessing (niyyamat) He provides. This is a sign of big hope for man. Unfortunately, people consider it in terms of the blessings of the present life only. But according to the Quran, life of man is actually a continuation from the present world to eternity. This verse then means that if man acknowledges the innumerable blessings that God has bestowed upon him – from oxygen, water, plants, life support system to his very existence – in this world itself, God will not discontinue these blessings for as long as he deserves.

In other words, this verse explicates the price for paradise. From his very being to his mind, sight, hearing and everything that man possesses is a blessing. Even the biggest galaxy, star, solar system is bereft of such blessings. If man actually discovers and acknowledges the blessings of God, it is a great deed. It means that man acknowledged the blessings of God when he was not compelled to do so. An honest acknowledgement would therefore ensure that God shall not take away His blessings from such a man.

Because life continues from pre-death period to post-death period, this verse too shall apply throughout. It means that all these blessings shall be given to man again, if in the present world, he does not make an effort to propagate his own agenda as against the agenda of God.

The stage of acknowledgement

To acknowledge God, man has to reach the point where despite possessing vision, he feels that he has no eyes. Where despite having the ability to hear, he feels he cannot. Where despite having a sound mind, he envisages the state where his memory no longer works. Only after taking himself to this 'zero', can man appreciate the value of the blessings he possesses.

It is a fact that the value of a blessing is discerned only after the blessing is taken away. An Urdu couplet aptly describes this as:

The value of a blessing is fathomed after it is taken away (Qadr-e-niyamat baad zawal-e-niyamat)

Unfortunately, man is in a habit of taking things for granted. He does not accord any importance to the blessings he possesses. In other words, when he sees the sun arise, man does not see the miracle of creation in it, while getting oxygen man assumes that he will continue getting it forever. Such a callous behaviour is not acceptable to God.

Here I am reminded of an incident of a man who was suffering from cancer. The myeloma had reached the stage where he could not even drink a sip of water, let alone eat food. He used to give just one advice to his visitors that, they must thank God for they can eat and drink.

Acknowledgement in other words, is not a simple matter. Man has to take himself to the point where he considers himself to be bereft of all blessings in life. Only then will he be able to truly acknowledge the beneficence of God. Some of my companions visited a

very wealthy person in Delhi. While showing them around, he took them to a small cottage which he said was the place where he was born. He never renovated it for it reminded him of the 'zero' that he was.

To therefore be recorded as having acknowledged the blessings of God in this world itself, man will have to reduce himself to the point of being nothing!

What is a blessing (niyamat)?

The blessings of God do not comprise only those items that an individual has but also those infinite articles that the entire humanity possesses. For instance, even if a person has never boarded a flight himself, he should still be thankful to God for enabling travel by air. Flight was man's aspiration since times immemorial. Today, it is a reality. We must therefore have the outlook to associate ourselves with the entire human race. If one stays restricted to individual blessings, one would be able to pay small gratitude but if he takes into consideration the entire humanity, he would be immersed in the feeling of thankfulness towards God and consequently become a part of the blessings that mankind has come to avail.

Conclusion

The agenda of God can be best described as comprising the following two aspects – attaining God-realisation (*Marefat*) and undertaking Dawah work.

While *Marefat* refers to the discovery of God and the subsequent acknowledgement of His glory by man, *dawah-work* refers to the sharing of this profound discovery. In other words, God opened the way to paradise for you and you must now share the discovery with others. *Dawah* therefore is the name of discovery / *marefat*- sharing.

It is imperative to understand that if you have not discovered God yourself, what you will tell to the world. It is primary therefore to realise the Greatness of God because man cannot afford to live in unawareness and die.

Death marks compulsory eviction from this world because of which man is taken out from Earth and placed elsewhere. The very person who was amidst us, suddenly becomes untraceable after he dies. No one knows of his whereabouts. This is the fate that awaits all of us. But before our time strikes, it is important that we mend our ways such that angles record us as being deserving of paradise.

Many people apparently do dawah work but their speeches only talk of establishing pride. Pride is of no use, neither in this world nor in the hereafter. The biggest discovery

that a man can have is the discovery of his modesty and *ijz* (helplessness). If on the contrary, you discover your greatness, you have discovered nothing because the road to paradise crosses modesty, it does not cross pride.

Modesty entails that we think of God as supremely powerful and ourselves as supremely helpless. The appearance of Dukhan is an alarming case in point. We must introspect and change our ways so that angels welcome us in the world hereafter.

May God give us the wisdom to understand the sensitivity of the issue and work towards rectifying our ways so that we may become eligible for the blessings of God, even in the world hereafter!