

Masjid: A House of Enlightenment or Brainwashing?

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Abstract: *The premises of the Masjid can be used for multiple purposes, as Sirah Literature guides. It may be used as an information and advisory center to disseminate information and advice on matters relevant to the community. The Masjid can and should be used as a training centre for providing social services and physical activities. Healthy minds go with healthy bodies hence physical recreation should be taken very seriously. To achieve this objective we have to involve our youth in the management of the Masjid as the future lies in their hands. Special attention should also be paid to the teaching of the mother tongue as well as Arabi to our youngsters, and English to the older and newly arrived immigrants. You may know that many churches in England and Europe were commercialised because Christian communities did not feel that they needed them. The only churches that survived were those that were part of the local community's lives. This is why we must consider the multifarious roles which a Masjid can play to maintain its eternal importance. Youngsters, as an important part of any society, need to have an attachment to the Masjid. Likewise, Masjid must accommodate and care for their needs and provide activities for them within its premises. If Masajid are to attain the same unique role they had in the past, it must be treated as a unique institution.*

Masjid in Islam was the focal point where political, social, and religious activities were perfectly blended together. The Islamic role of the Masjid has always been instrumental in the social, moral and political uplift of the Muslim community. However, after colonialism in Muslim countries, the decline of the political supremacy of the Muslims resulted in their disintegration under the foreign rule, and the concept and role of the Masjid reduced significantly. This has not only rendered the institution of Masjid ineffective as a center of social uplift but has rather increased sectarianism among Muslims. As Muslims we must understand that Islam invites to learn religion through intellectual discussion, logic, and study in a scientific manner, not blind following. Today Masajid (singular: Masjid) have become the favourite hunting grounds of clerics who perfectly influence the minds of teenagers and teach them to hate and fight any body with a different opinion than theirs.

Brainwashing is more alive and well than ever before but its techniques are not new; it has been used for centuries, though only recently has it been so carefully analyzed and applied. Khidmat (service) is one of the favourite terms of the clergy which they frequently use to decorate themselves. This glorified word is repeatedly used to manipulate the masses. All those paid who introduce themselves as 'Khidmat-Guzar or Khidmat-Gaar' are actually servants of an individual or an organization, and technically not entitled to use this term. Only those individuals who serve voluntarily without any salary or benefits are eligible to be addressed as such.

The brainwashed usually passionately defend their manipulators, claiming that they have simply been "shown the right path" or have been transformed in a miraculous way that would lead towards Jannah. In Masajid clergy convince in a manner that especially the young are inclined towards them. Normally teenagers are the favourite target of the religious mafia since it is relatively easy to indoctrinate them. The process of brainwashing continues through a series of lectures repeatedly in which the speaker addresses the audience with an emphasis on sentimental sentences like "you are the selected ones", "your body will illuminate divine light", and "beautiful virgins await you in Jannah". These youngsters then fight their parents for the funds demanded by their Guruji – the religious thugs. The next step of brainwashing is prohibiting rational thought process which is a curse engulfing the Muslim community worldwide. One of its outcomes is religious terrorism.

These fanatics use the Minbar to not only abuse the opposite schools of thought but also those who do not follow them or donate funds as per their wishes. Education is the clear answer to prevent fanaticism, but the clergy has ensured that the masses are kept busy in hate mongering activities rather than ponder over advancing useful causes and building solidarity with each other. Moreover, it is not known who has taught them to put a few Miswaks in the Wazu area of the Masjid to be used by many one after the other in the name of Sunnah. Not a single Sunnah encourages this as hygiene is one of the basic teachings of Islam. It is Sunnah so long as it maintains cleanliness.

The clergy is doing to Muslims as Hitler did with the Jews through the Holocaust. It is not an exaggeration to say that Al-Qaida, Taliban, ISIL, and other likeminded militant wings – being run by a cabal which includes the clerics – are inflicting destruction far worse than the Mongols and other plunderers ever did in the medieval era. They promote religious hatred and intolerance. Today we are witnessing clerics of all schools misleading their supporters by inventing new techniques of minting money in the name of Islam. The most shocking is that the majority of them don't even speak, write and understand Arabic – the language of the Qur'an. Instead of the highly learned, many Masajid are controlled by incompetent and illiterate clerics. On the other hand, Christian and Jewish priests are usually scholars who are fluent in at least in two languages. Nowadays non-competent clerics are found in plenty and unfortunately public respects them blindly. The main cause is lack of religious Talim from the canon sources – the Qur'an and the Sunnah and our blind following of the clergy.

It is direly needed to pay attention towards the re-construction of Masjid as an institution and use it as our predecessors did for the community, in keeping with the Nabawi Sirah. Our Masajid must be fully equipped with the required latest technologies to advance community causes. It is necessary that an independent portion should be fixed for women where they can learn. Islam is the religion of harmony and advocates reconciliatory measures first between members of the Ummah and then non-Muslims. Education is the fundamental instrument in the prevention of all negative activities. In Islam, the term education is a compound in itself that addresses all disciplines of learning. Therefore, the term 'Islamic education' is absent in the Qur'an because it delivers the theory of 'ilm'i Naafi (useful knowledge). Islam has not segregated sciences into two parts – religious or secular. This originated from the Church which confined religious education for priests and nuns and diverted studies of sciences, technology, social sciences etc for the public. On the basis of this division, the West designed an educational system, and the subjugated Muslim world adopted this dualism of "religious" and "secular" education during the colonial rule.

Masjid is not only for 'ibadah alone; it is the place of propagating the Daw'ah of Islam where ibad-Allah (slaves of Allah) receive Talim and gain 'ilm about Islam. It is our duty to educate non-Muslims about our religion and pass on to them the real Talim of Islam to remove any misunderstanding. They should be treated well and invited to our Masajid on special occasions. The Masjid established by Rasulullah(S) in Madinah served as a centre for the determination of all matters of the society and a sure source of all lawful benefits. Rasulullah(S) used the Masjid to purify the souls of the believers and decorate their behaviour, while Muslims today only decorate Masajid but forget character building.

During the Nabawi era, ladies were partners in society, and mostly within the institution of the Masjid. They contributed in Ibadah, community events, and administrative and educational activities. Women even requested that they have a specific day allocated for them to meet with Rasulullah(S). There is a need today to develop a more welcoming and adequate space for women, and to train and educate them to contribute more effectively to the Masjid as partners.

We should open our eyes and utilize our Masjid for the following:

- i. Only qualified and competent clerics should be appointed as leader of Salaat. They must have sound religious knowledge and good exposure to modern education.*
- ii. Talim of the Qur'an should be conducted by competent teachers who can explain the teachings and meanings of the Qur'an.*
- iii. Talim of the Qur'an should not be taught from a sectarian lense otherwise militant nature cannot be eliminated.*
- iv. A student friendly approach should be followed.*
- v. It is imperative to attach libraries to Masajid. In developed countries, you will find libraries in all prominent educational institutions.*
- vi. It can be used to teach self defence, as was done at the time of Rasulullah(S).*
- vii. It can be used to decide cases according to the Shariah.*

Madaris faculty should be disciplined and taught how to behave as many of them require this training. Many of their scandals continue to serve as fodder to malign the traditional educational system of Islam. It is necessary that notorious clerics should be replaced with decent Ulama in all institutions.

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