

ICNA: An Islamic Jamaah And A Movement

Let's Join Hands To Establish Allah's Deen

By Dr. Mohammad Yunus

Allah says in the Qur'an:

"The same Deen (way of life) has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah which We have sent by inspiration to you (O'Prophet Mohammad)-and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses and Jesus; namely that you should establish the Deen and make no divisions therein." 42:13.

Allah is the creator of this universe and He is the Guide for everything he has created. He created the mankind and sent him to this earth with the purpose of Ibadah or the submission to Allah's commands. Then Allah with His immense Mercy sent the guidance for the mankind through His messengers as described in the above ayah of Qu'ran. This guidance or Deen was the same for all the messengers. These messengers were also instructed to establish this Deen where it was not established. Let us now briefly understand the meaning and scope of the words "aqeemuddin". These words include not only to practice the religion in individual and collective life, propagation of its true teachings in others but also to strive and make this Deen a way of life for all. Propagation of the Deen is not an end but a means towards achieving the ultimate goal, i.e., establishing this way of life in every aspect of the individual and the collective life.

When we look at the lives of the Prophets of Allah, they struggled and strived to the same objective. Prophet Mohammad (s) in his 23 years of struggle as a Messenger of Allah exemplified with his tireless sincere effort the meaning of Iqamat Deen. With his preaching, practice and struggle, he was able to establish a society and state based on true obedience of Allah. Muslim Ummah today has the same responsibility as was assigned to the prophets of Allah since there is not going to be any more prophets sent by Allah till the Day of Judgment. We are the trustees of Allah's Deen and wherever we are, we must respond to this call: "Be the helpers (in the cause) of Allah." 61:14. While living in North America, we as Muslims share the same responsibility as was assigned to the prophets. We are to follow the footsteps of the prophets and share this message of truth with our fellow citizens of this land. We ought to understand our Deen through its sources, i.e., Qu'ran and the Sunnah of the Prophet. We must translate this understanding in our day to day life, both individual and family life. Then we must share this truth through our words and actions. Our day to day activities must shine the truth and the beauty of this divine guidance so that we may be able to light up the way for others. However, this monumental task can not be carried out as individuals. There must be a collective effort launched to achieve these high objectives.

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Islamic Circle of North America is an Islamic Jamaah, i.e., an organization struggling towards Iqamat Deen in this land since early 70's. It has been motivating Muslims to wake up to their obligations as described above and not be lost in the race for just material gains in this land of plenty. On the one hand they are to protect their Islamic identity and those of their children and on the other hand they are to take the message of Allah to their fellow Americans and the Canadians. They have the unique opportunity to achieve both these objectives through an organized struggle through national Islamic movement like ICNA.

What is an Islamic Movement?

Islamic movement is the term used for that organized and collective effort waged to establish Al Islam in its complete form in all aspects of life. Its ultimate objective is to achieve the pleasure of our Creator Allah and success in the hereafter through struggle for Iqamat Deen. Islamic movements are active in various parts of the world to achieve the same objectives. It is our obligation as Muslims to engage in the same noble cause here in North America.

Characteristics of an Islamic Movement

Following are some of the hallmarks of the Islamic movement as we learn it from the model of the Prophet Mohammad (s).

- 1-This movement is based on the ideology of Islam. It considers all humanity like one family based upon our common parents and common creator. Therefore, it addresses all human beings regardless of their race, color, national origin, language, culture, ethnicity or economic status. It wants everyone to succeed before Allah. Its message is: "O' Mankind! Submit unto your Lord (Allah) who created you." 2:21.
- 2-It considers disobedience of Allah as the root cause of all human problems. Moreover, it believes that obedience of Allah is the only solution for all human ills. Until the human beings submit to Allah's Guidance, there can not be true peace in our lives.
- 3-Islamic movement believes that the human beings are overburdened under the obedience of other humans and their oppressive systems. It is only the obedience of Allah which will set everyone truly free.
- 4-Islamic movement strives to enrich its workers with the knowledge of Islam and builds the Islamic character based on Taqwah and the love of Allah and the love of all human beings with compassion and mercy for all. It projects Prophet Mohammad's character and personality as the role model for all its members. He was full of mercy for all and never had an ill will for anyone. He even forgave his bitterest enemies and was most generous in his attitude to all.
- 5-Islamic movement wages its struggle strictly on the model of the holy Prophet. It derives its guiding principles from the Qu'ran and

Prophet's sunnah .It studies the environment it is struggling in and then develops a strategy most suitable for that environment.

Levels of work by the Islamic movement

1- Individual level

Islamic movement believes that the work of reform should begin from oneself. Islamic workers must broaden the horizon of their knowledge. They must know their religion well. They ought to study Qu'ran and Sunnah of the Prophet. Moreover, they should have the knowledge of the example of the companions of the Prophets. They should study the Islamic Fiqh, history, laws and the Arabic language. Then this knowledge must be translated into day to day life. One must also struggle to develop the beautiful character traits we see in the beautiful model of Prophet Mohammed (s).

2- Reform one's family

One has the responsibility to impart Islamic knowledge and then build Islamic character in family members. This is the second level of Iqamat Deen. We are responsible before Allah for this task.

3- Reform the society

This requires active work of Da'wah to the non-Muslims through all the lawful means at our disposal. Moreover, it includes social service and reform within our capacity. It may include helping the poor and needy, sick and disabled, old and downtrodden and disadvantaged in the society. Prophet (s), was helping everyone he could and eager to relieve the pain and anguish of anyone he could. Islamic movement also addresses the issues of the society and offers solutions in the light of Allah's guidance.

4- Towards an Islamic state and society

With this work of propagation of Islam, social reform, this truth is introduced to a large part of the society. A good part of the society's thinking individuals join the movement. Then, it may move to establish the Islamic society obedient to Allah's commands.

5- Establish unified Muslim Ummah and Khilafah

Wherever Islamic movement succeeds to establish true Islamic societies, they will form coalitions and alliances. This will lead to the unity of the Ummah and step towards the re-establishment of Khilafah.

Stages of Work

Following are the different stages of work that the movement tries to engage in:

1- Introduction and propagation of Dawah Ilallah.(Tareef)

Following points are emphasized in this stage of work. a-Islam is a comprehensive way of life. It provides guidance in all aspects of our life.

b-Islam is the only solution to all human problems. Different social, moral, family ,economic, educational and personal problems faced by the society are analyzed. Then remedy is suggested in the light of Islamic guidance.

c-Relations with other organizations are defined based upon the Qur'anic principle: "*Co-operate on the basis of righteousness and piety and do not cooperate in the matters of sin and disobedience.*"

d-Strategies and technique are developed for effective Dawah to non Muslims. Those who accept the truth of Islam are then provided appropriate Islamic literature and given opportunity for learning Islam. They are made part of the Islamic Ummah as brothers and sisters.

2- Formulation and preparation of Islamic workers' team. (Takween)

Preparation of dedicated Islamic workers is an essential part of the movement's work. This work consists of the following.

a- Spiritual refinement and elevation. Study syllabi and programs are devised so that the Islamic workers achieve better spiritual enrichment and elevation. Its goal is closer relation with Allah and the dependence upon Him for everything. Moreover, to develop the true realization of life hereafter and the fear of accountability.

b- Building the knowledge of the Deen and the society. This is done by study and training sessions and special camps where scholars and teachers spend time to help the eager learners to enrich themselves with the true Ilm.

c- Neighbornet System. This is the grass root organizational unit established to achieve following objectives:

- Training of the workers by mutual study and guidance by the leader of the neighbornet.
- To develop close brotherly relations like being a member of a family.
- Dawa to the non Muslims and welcoming the new Muslims in this family.
- Helping each other in needs like the members of a close family.

3- Implementation of the Islamic guidance.(Tanfeez)

In this stage, when the opportunity arrives, Islam is to be truly implemented in the society at all levels. This will require strength of the organization and the leadership with substantial support by the people of the

land.

ICNA's Development and Progress

With the above mentioned objectives and principles in mind, ICNA was established in early 70's. Following are the two stages we recognize in its development.

1-1971-1977-Halqah Ahbabe Islami. Workers of the Islamic movement from Indo-Pakistan-Bangladesh subcontinent established this Jamaah in early 1971. At that time, its objectives were limited. It was taking its message in Urdu language to the immigrants of that background. Work was limited to few cities. Bylaws of the organization were not that explicit.

2-1977 to today. Islamic Circle of North America.

Objective of this movement was redefined. It was declared by the resolution of its members, that this movement is to work to do Iqamat Deen in North America. New detailed constitution was published. English was adapted as the medium of communication. ICNA established its own forums for the Da'wah work at the local, regional and national level. We established vital institutions at the national level for the support of its Da'wah activities. *Message* magazine was published on a regular monthly basis. We also embarked upon publishing Islamic literature for the need of the movement. Recognizing other movement oriented groups in this land, we are continuing to cooperate and coordinate our efforts with them. Our work among the youth is organized in the form of our affiliated organization, YM, both in young sisters and the brothers. Our Sisters Wing is making progress in the Da'wah activities among our Muslim sisters. They have their own publications and a network of grass root level organization. Our annual conventions are well attended by the Muslims of all backgrounds. We just had a successful 25th annual convention. Alhamdulillah.

In spite of our human shortcomings, ICNA is focused on its mission, Iqamat Deen. Its workers and leadership are struggling in their humble ways for the sake of Allah with the hope to achieve success in the hereafter. ■

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