

The importance of maintaining a correct atmosphere within an Islamic party

The following is the transcript of a talk delivered on this subject.

Today I want to address an important subject which can aid the da'wah or if it is neglected can have a negative impact on it and thus lead to the negligence of the obligation and the anger of Allah (swt).

The issue I want to address is that of 'Maintaining the correct atmosphere within a party'. I want to discuss the meaning of atmosphere, examples of incorrect atmospheres that can possibly come about and then explain the correct atmosphere and what we can do to maintain it.

Meaning of Atmosphere

An atmosphere exists when a thought is applied in a reality repeatedly. It is something that usually people can sense. For example there can be a particular atmosphere in a mosque, home, cricket match, school, madrassah and community. As an example if segregation between men and women is repeatedly applied in a home, even the one who does not believe in that he would perceive it and tell his wife to go with the other women. If a new student entered a school where the norm was to study hard and not to talk during the lectures then even if the student himself wasn't a serious student and didn't care about the lectures – he would perceive the atmosphere and would most likely remain quiet during the lectures.

Public opinion (Ra'i Amma) is a wider manifestation of an atmosphere encompassing the whole society.

The atmosphere undoubtedly affects individuals. So if the atmosphere is good it can have a good effect and if it is bad its effect can be negative. Take the example of a child growing up in a home – the atmosphere in the home will undoubtedly affect him, so if the atmosphere was one of foul language, egoism, not caring for the ahkam shariah, tribal and family feuding – then most likely he would be influenced by this. On the contrary if the atmosphere was one of Taqwa, adherence to the ahkam shariah, recitation of the Quran, the discussion of Islam, etc – then most likely he would be influenced by that.

The Prophet (saw) emphasised the importance of the good atmosphere when he (saw) said:

Abu Musa narrated that the Prophet (saw) said, "The example of a good companion in comparison with a bad one, is like that of the musk seller and the blacksmith's bellows (or furnace); from the first you would either buy musk or enjoy its good smell while the bellows would either burn your clothes or your house, or you get a bad nasty smell thereof." [Bukhari]

This analogy makes the point strongly that the environment which we are affected by just like good and bad smells do.

The Prophet (saw) again emphasised the impact of good and bad company. There is a certain atmosphere that exists between people when they meet, so there is a different atmosphere normally with your family then with your friends.

Also he (saw) said: "A person follows the Deen (way of life) of his close friend; therefore let each of you look carefully at whom he chooses for friends" [Tirmidhi]

In another hadith the Prophet (saw) mentioned that your friends in the Dunya will be your friends in the Akhirah.

Atmosphere in a Party

It is important to appreciate that a political party based on Islam works together with each other in order to help revive the Ummah. This means that the people within a party will meet each other regularly in the course of the da'wah whether this is in Halaqa, cultural sessions, circles, talks, meetings, day to day activities of winning people.

Therefore an atmosphere exists within a party naturally. This atmosphere if it is correct it will aid the work and the progress.

Let us look at some examples of negative atmospheres that could possibly exist amongst groups which da'wah carriers need to be careful of:

1) Overly humorous

It is noticed that this sometimes occurs when instead of a serious atmosphere of culture and da'wah we find an atmosphere filled with jokes which takes people away from seriousness and distracts them from thinking.

Anas (ra) narrated that the Messenger (saw) said: "Had you known what I know you would have laughed less and cried more. So the companions covered their faces as they were crying and sniffing." (Agreed upon)

People must be careful about humour and joking, there is a time and a place for it – but it should be limited and not so common. It should definitely not be common in the atmosphere of a party. The atmosphere within an Islamic party must be one dominated by the discussion of fiqh, usul ul-fiqh, political analysis, aqeeda, the reality of the ummah and da'wah.

Sheikh Taqi ud-deen an-Nabhani (rh) said in his book at-Tafkeer (Thinking):

"Yet seriousness is not intrinsic in thinking, indeed most of the thinking of the people is devoid of seriousness. The people carry out their works through habit and in virtue of continuity.

Amusement in their thinking exists distinctly. Therefore, it is necessary that seriousness is exercised even by pretence, where the purpose is the basis of this seriousness. So the pretence of seriousness is the purpose itself. Hence, it must be said that seriousness is not natural, even if it was noticed in some people that they are naturally serious.”

Basically this means that people are not usually serious in thinking, this is clear from the reality of people in society today where people are obsessed with shallow amusements of the television dramas, movies and music. We need to have seriousness in thinking which is not normally natural, the Sheikh mentions that it is necessary that serious is exercised even by pretence which means even if it seems artificial we need to attempt to be serious and thus naturally the atmosphere of seriousness would exist.

Allah (swt) also emphasised this when he said:

59) **وَتَضْحَكُونَ وَلَا تَبْكُونَ ۚ أَفَمِنَ هَذَا الْحَدِيثِ تَعْجَبُونَ**

“Do you then wonder at this recital (the Qur'an)? And you laugh at it and weep not.” [TMQ an-Najm:59-60]

2) Over obsession with other groups

It is possible for people within a group to discuss too much about other groups for no real purpose. This also leads to a distraction away from thinking about the groups adopted culture and world affairs to continually discussing the actions of other groups – which is fruitless. This would also influence new people who join the groups work into thinking in the wrong manner it can also leave a bitter taste in them especially if they were previously affiliated with these groups. This type of atmosphere exists in some groups as it is emotionally appealing, it makes someone feel that they are better. Da’wah carriers must be wary of this danger.

Sheikh Taqi ud-deen an-Nabhani (rh) said in his book Mefaheem (Concepts):

“It is vital that the party bloc does not consider itself as an entity separate from the Ummah it lives with. Rather it must consider itself a part of this Ummah, because the Ummah are Muslims like the members of the bloc. The members of the party bloc are not better than any of the Muslims, even if they understand Islam and work for it. The members of the bloc have a heavier responsibility and greater accountability in serving the Muslims and working for Islam in the sight of Allah. The members of the Islamic group should know they are worthless regardless of the size of the group without the Ummah, which they work amongst. Consequently their duty is to interact with the Ummah and to proceed with her in the struggle, ensuring that the Ummah should feel that she is the one who is working for the struggle. The bloc (party) has to stay away from any action, word or remark, regardless of its size, that would imply that the block is separate and distinct from the Ummah. This is because this alienates the Ummah from the party and its da’wah, and makes the block a problem added to the host of problems in the society which prevents its revival. So the Ummah is an indivisible single entity and the party bloc rises to establish the state and to be the guardian for Islam in the Ummah and in the state, ensuring that no deviation can take place. If it

notices any of that in the Ummah, it will instil in the Ummah her iman and her ingenuity. If it notices any deviation in the state then it will work together with the Ummah to rectify it according to Islam. Thus, the Da'wah carried by the group will successfully proceed along its natural path with excellence."

Of course some groups have wrong concepts and methodologies. However the daw'ah should not become obsessed about discussing about them and also view them in the correct light.

We need to focus on the thought and refuting the incorrect thoughts regardless of who holds these.

In reality it is more productive to focus thought upon the Ummah as a whole which is wider than groups, in reality most of the people are not affiliated with groups and it is easier to win them to the work of da'wah. Of course it is natural to come across people from other groups and discuss with them, however this should not be the only focus of da'wah work.

3) Lack of cultural atmosphere due to over emphasis on discussion of activity

Another problem that can exist is when da'wah carriers meet they mostly discuss about activity rather than about their adopted culture, the wider Islamic culture and world affairs. A party needs to have strong da'wah carriers who understand the Islamic thought in the best way and utilise it in order to revive the Ummah. Therefore amongst themselves there should be an atmosphere of discussion, questioning and debate. This type of atmosphere greatly aids in the development of its shabab as they then be exposed to different questions, opinions, evidences and issues which will further their development.

It is better to have 10 activists who are strong in the culture and activity then to have 100 activists who are weak.

It should be natural when da'wah carriers meet each other that would discuss world affairs to understand them in a better manner such as the plan to divide Iraq into 3, or the re-emphasis on the Palestinian issue and the dangerous call for the 2 state solution, etc. This also includes national affairs. Or to refine their understanding of the concepts they study in halaqa such as Qada wal-Qadr, the meaning of revival and ideology, Ijtihad, the meaning of Sunnah, the strong and the weak types of evidences in Usul ul-Fiqh, etc.

4) Factionalism

Another atmosphere which is very dangerous for the work is when various factions begin to exist within a party, when people have allegiance to specific people rather than the thought of the party. This type of atmosphere begins to exist when people violate the ahkam shariah and the administrative rules of a party and start discussing about each other negatively.

It is natural that some people may have more closeness and friendship with some of their brothers than others, however they must realise that they have an ideological bond that bonds them

together in a hizb. This bond should not be based on friendship or personal affiliation, it is based upon the Aqeeda and the party culture. These 2 things form the basis of their relationship with each other. Therefore factionalism is prohibited to exist in an Islamic party, it must be a single united whole.

It is natural that sometimes they may see mistakes from their brothers or weaknesses but they must ensure that they follow the ahkam shariah and the administrative rules of their party in how we deal with this. Allah (swt) says:

مِنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا

“O you who believe! Avoid much suspicions, indeed some suspicions are sins.” [TMQ Al-Hujuraat:12]

Ibn ‘Abbas said in the Tafseer (exegeses) of this ayah: Allah (swt) forbade the believer from thinking badly of another believer.

Abu Hurayrah (ra) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (saw) said: “Beware of suspicion for suspicion is the most mendacious of talk.”

To think badly of a believer who is apparently good and upright is not allowed. Rather it is recommended that one thinks well of him.

Islam has prohibited backbiting and slander and thus removing the cause of suspicion and doubt amongst people. Allah (swt) says:

“Neither backbite one another. Would one of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother. You abhor that (so abhor the other)! And keep your duty to Allah. Lo! Allah is Relenting, Merciful.” [Al-Hujarat: 12]

It is narrated by Abu Dawud on the authority of Anas (RA), the Messenger of Allah said: “On the night of Isra I passed by some people who had copper nails and they were clawing their faces and chests with them. I asked Jibriel: Who are these persons? He said: These are the people who eat the flesh of human beings and disgrace them.”

Islam also forbids envy and jealousy which are the common causes of problems amongst friends in Western societies. The Prophet (saw) said, “Do not have malice against a Muslim; do not be envious of other Muslims; do not go against a Muslim and forsake him. O the slaves of Allah (swt)! Be like brothers with each other. It is not violable for a Muslim to desert his brother for over three days”.

Belittling each other is almost a pastime in the West. The Prophet (saw) said, “The believer can do no worse than belittle his brother”. [Ihya uloom ad Deen]

A Muslim should not hold grudges against another Muslim even if they are differing personalities.

The Prophet (saw) warned against this when he said, “The gates of Paradise will be open on Mondays and on Thursdays, and every servant [of Allah] who associates nothing with Allah will be forgiven, except for the man who has a grudge against his brother. [About them] it will be said: Delay these two until they are reconciled; delay these two until they are reconciled; delay these two until they are reconciled”. [Muslim]

Friends should feel at ease with each other without feeling inferior or superior. Ego's must be tamed according to Islam. The Prophet (saw) said, “A man is on a par with the Deen of his friend and there is no good in the fellowship of one who does not regard you as highly as himself”. [Ihya uloom ad Deen]

Following the correct process

The following are steps that a da'wah carrier should take to resolve a problems:

- 1) When a da'wah carrier sees something he or she hates, or sees an error from another activist within his group, he should set out without delay to speak to him, as a brother, advising him and reminding him. He must not speak about this matter with any other person, whether he is a position of responsibility or not.
- 2) When a da'wah carrier sees something he hates or sees an error from one responsible (Mas'oul), he should set out without delay, to speak to him as a brother, advising him and reminding him. He must not speak to any other than the responsible person (Mas'oul) before that.
- 3) If the error or the subject of complaint was not corrected, then the da'wah carrier should speak only to the locally responsible person of the locality (Mahalliyah) to which he belongs. He should talk to him about what he knows and must not speaks to any other person.
- 4) If the individual within the group did not find the convincing or final solution to what he wants, he should not speak, in the matter, to any other individual in the group except the person responsible for the da'wah in his country. If he knows him personally he should raise it directly with him, if he does not know the person responsible for his group in the country then he should send a letter addressed to him via his supervisor or locally responsible person. The supervisor of the halaqah, the locally responsible person or any other person should not be allowed to read the letter unless with the direct permission of the member responsible (Mas'oul) for the activity within the country.
- 5) If he did not find the solution from the responsible member in the country, then he should submit the complaint to the Ameer of his party through the official channel.
- 6) Collective accounting must be forbidden in a party. If someone sees something he hates or an error from a fellow activist then he must discuss with him individually about this matter. It should be forbidden by the group for anyone whether a supervisor of Halaqat, member, student, Mas'oul or manager of the country to account another activist in front of others.

7) It should be allowed for any student during a Halaqa (circle) to correct the supervisor if he thinks he has made a mistake in the explanation. This should be in the correct polite style in compliance with the Islamic etiquette. If he is still not satisfied with the explanation he should note down the question and ask any fellow da'wah carrier who has knowledge about it or to raise the question in question & answer session if such a session is held. If the question remains unanswered then he should write down the question and send it to the manager of the country via the official channel.

Loving each other for the sake of Allah (swt)

Da'wah carriers should take inspiration from the texts emphasising loving each other for the sake of Allah (swt) and must work to be like the Sahabah in the atmosphere and bond they had:

It was reported by Muslim on the authority of Abu Hurairah (ra) that the Prophet (saw) said: "A man went to visit a brother of his in another town and Allah deputed an angel to await him on his way, so when he came to him he said, "Where are you going?" He replied, "I am going to visit a brother of mine in this town." He said, "Have you done him some favour which you desire to be returned?" He said, "No, it is just that I love him for Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent." He said, "Then I am a messenger sent by Allah to you (to inform you) that Allah loves you as you have loved him for Allah's sake."

The Prophet (saw) also said, "Whoever would like to taste the sweetness of Iman (belief) then let him love a person only for Allah's sake" [Ahmad]

It was reported by Abu Dawud that Umar ibn al-Khattab narrated that the Prophet (saw) said, "Indeed from the servants of Allah there are some who are not Prophets, yet they will be envied by the Prophets and the martyrs". It was asked, "Who are they? That we may love them". He (saw) said, "They are people who have mutual love through light from Allah, not due to kinship or ancestry, their faces will be enlightened, upon pillars of light, they will not fear when the people fear, or grieve when the people grieve". Then he (saw) recited:

وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفَ عَلَيْهِمْ

"No doubt! Verily, on the friends of Allah there is no fear nor shall they grieve." [TMQ 10: 62]

comments:

Whilst essentially what you have written is correct; there is something more fundamental that needs to be understood.

Fundamentally an atmosphere in a party is generated by the idea it believes in and its efforts to bring these ideas to life. As all its aims are set by this idea and restricted by this idea. Its actions are also conducted on the basis of this idea.

Without going into references to books this is what is described as the atmosphere of iman in the

party culture. This atmosphere needs to be then transferred from the party to the society and state.

However when the understanding of the ideology is incomplete or weak amongst the shabab and more importantly those that shoulder the burdens of the dawah structurally then the possibility of a correct atmosphere on the basis of the idea is remote. What you suggest is not much more than a sticky plaster approach of addressing the symptoms.

If the ability to convince is replaced with manipulation or the aims of the ideology are not clearly manifested this leads to the pollution of the atmospheres. If political trickery, mind games, and intellectual dishonesty replace honest thought and judgements based upon the ideology then this is the cause of such bad atmospheres. This I would suggest may be a cause of some of what you mentioned eg factionalism which would only be natural if there were disparate views or grievances. This would be because the ideology would be conceived in a different ways by different individuals, or individuals being human would need emotional support or a shoulder to cry on as a result of being played with.

Similarly if actions are undertaken without a clear link to the ideology then this clouds the atmosphere and distances it from the correct atmosphere. An atmosphere that is a confused mixed up atmosphere rather than an atmosphere conducive to dawah and the carrying of Islam.

The atmosphere is largely down to those that are in responsibility and those of knowledge, influence and understanding within such structures.

Some ways to correct the atmospheres might be the following.

1. To clearly state what the Islamic view is on issues then to abide by these views and carry them to others.
2. Ensure that there is a high level of understanding and compliance to the dictates of Islam.
3. To ensure that every action undertaken by those in responsibility is done on the basis of Islam not on the basis of other agendas.
4. Clarity is required about the Islamic thought so that individuals follow by thought not personality or a cultish mentality. An atmosphere of study and learning should be present rather than arrogance and pretence of knowledge.
5. A clear link about the ideology and the aims of structured activity needs to be perceived by all.
6. Reconciliation about living in dar ul kufr and the ability to embody Islam its thought and its emotion within such a society needs to be given.

And Allah (swt) knows best.