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Emulate the Prophet, strive for change

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WE are grateful to Allah for being able to once again celebrate Ma'al Hijrah in peace, comfort and contriteness. We should be grateful as there have generally been no incidents which can tarnish the good name and image of Islam and the Muslims in our country. Although the country is facing economic problems, we can continue to abide by Allah's command and practise the teachings of His prophet, Muhammad, resolutely and completely.

Owing to our adherence to Islam, we have been able to govern and develop this country to a level where nobody can say that Islam is an obstacle to achievements in this world.

Hijrah is a great lesson and example for the Muslims. Among the Prophet's sunnah (traditions), the hijrah from Mecca to Medina 1,419 years ago was a highly significant event in the struggle of the Prophet in propagating Islam, so much so that that particular date was declared the beginning of the Islamic era.

Hijrah means moving from one place to another in the desire for change from one imperfect situation to one which is better. The Prophet's migration from Mecca to Medina followed the oppression he faced in Mecca until he could no longer propagate Islam.

On the contrary, from the meeting with the people of Medina who visited Mecca, the Prophet realised they were more willing to accept the teachings of Islam. Therefore, the hope to propagate Islam if the Prophet moved to Medina was greater.

The migration was well arranged and done cautiously. A number of followers were sent before the Prophet himself migrated to Medina. We know the reception in Medina by the residents were warm and Islam grew rapidly there.

In the Quran, in verse 53 of Al-Anfaal, Allah said:

"Verily, Allah will never change a grace which he has bestowed on a people until they change what is in their own self."

Similarly, in verse 11 of Ar-Rad, Allah said:

"Verily, Allah will not change the good condition of a people as long as they do not change their state of goodness themselves."

We Muslims know these verses and know the Prophet migrated to change the situation which was then in the way of success of Islamic propagation. But we do not really pay attention to the actual meaning of the prophetic tradition and Allah's saying on changing of oneself.

Therefore, if our situation is not good certainly the fault is ours as we do not act to change the situation.

Is our situation already very good?

We are thankful for all the good things we enjoy in this country. Our country is peaceful and we do not have to face many problems such as famine and major catastrophe suffered by others. Nevertheless, we are still weak and easily oppressed by others. Our weaknesses are due to our culture which does not really stress hard work, seeking knowledge, moderation in life, adopting good values and other things. It is, therefore, easy for anybody to defeat and humiliate us. This leads our religion to be humiliated also.

If we understand the true meaning of "hijrah" and the verses mentioned above, we will definitely move from the culture which is not suitable to that which can make us progressive and strong.

Actually, our ability is no less better than other people. We have proven that if we make an effort, Insya Allah, we can achieve whatever that have been achieved by others.

Science and technology, management, business and industry, invention of sophisticated things, all these can be done if we put in effort.

If we do not want to change from what had been our norm to something new, our ability will never be tested nor put to good use.

We must, however, remember that not everything new is good and not all changes will bring success. Again we must refer to the struggle of the Prophet. When he went to Taif to garner support and spread the teachings of Islam, the attempt failed because the people of Taif, who had their own idols, refused to accept Islam. They refused to submit to God.

The Prophet was not demoralised by this failure nor the unwillingness to make changes. If he had been frustrated with the reception he received in Taif and hence not gone to Medina, Islam might not have spread as it had.

Although we know that God can make anything happen easily, He wants us to strive for it. Our efforts may or may not be fruitful. It is up to God to determine. But just because success is not assured, it does not mean we should not work and try to change our lot.

This is the invaluable lessons from the Hijrah. We should not celebrate the coming of Muharram just so to remember the Hijrah or as a new year festival.

This occasion should become a reminder to us so that we would emulate the Prophet who strived for change upon God's behest.

In tackling the current crisis faced by the country, and this crisis is small compared to that faced by the Prophet in Mecca, we have to "emigrate" not from this country to another but in the ways of addressing the problems.

If there is a need for us to be thrifty, to work harder, to be more patient and moderate in our stand, then we must be willing to make these changes.

God willing, if we are prepared to change, then this Ma'al Hijrah will not just be to celebrate a historical day but will be much more beneficial and meaningful. God willing, we Muslims will be able to free ourselves from the problems affecting us and to overcome all forms of oppression.