WHICH ORGANIZATION TO SUPPORT?

Another important thing to realise is that, at the end of the day, we are going to work through organisations. That’s just how human societies are organised. You are going to work through a masjid or a national organisation or a madressa or a school or whatever. You are going to work through one of those channels for the sake of the deen. In most cases, you are not going to work by yourself; you are going to work through some collective initiative. But you make dua at the end (Allahu yajmauna bainana), ‘Allah make union between all of us.’

Some Muslims prematurely say, “There are so many Muslim organisations and Islamic societies, why can’t we just have one Muslim organisation?” I said at the beginning, that it is not the way Islam works. There’s no one single true effort. There’s going to be thousands of efforts and they all have to be
respected so long as they are addressing something unique, for the sake of Allah and with sincerity.

**STARTING A NEW EFFORT:**

If you are going to start an effort, an organisation or something, be my guest, do it. All the best to you. Just make sure you don’t start something in competition to something else. It should not be aimed at disrupting other good efforts. There is strength in ‘jamiat’ (Collectiveness) for individuals as well as organizations. If there is already a sincere effort going on for a particular cause, put your energies to strengthen that, rather than weakening it with undue competition. You should start something because there is a need which isn’t being addressed and you feel that it should be addressed. That’s when you have the need to start a new organisation. It is not because, ‘Those guys did it and they’re pretty successful, so I’ll start something just like it so I can be successful too.’ No, that’s making unhealthy competition. Healthy competition is in good deeds, not in undercutting good efforts of others.

Because, at the end of the day, Muslims are a minority in many countries. Even where they are in a majority, the practicing Muslims are still a minority or under attack from the secularist Muslims. We have a relatively small population in the US, UK, Australia etc. This means that we are limited financially and physically in some manners. So if there’s a good effort happening in one area, then all of our resources should be put
in that and if we want to contribute money in other projects or efforts, they should be ‘complementary’ efforts not ‘competing’ efforts. We should not compete like that!

**TIME TO UNIT, NOT TO DIVIDE:**

Is it easy or difficult to build a high school? It is Hard! But there are cities in this country, where we have two Islamic high schools within half a mile of each other. Why? Because this principal doesn’t like the personality of that principal or he doesn’t follow the same school of thought as the residents. This is ridiculous! Everybody has to suffer because somebody has a personality disorder or they don’t know how to work with each other. We need to understand that the work of Islam is greater than ourselves! We have to put personality and individual preferences aside. You have to put them aside!
O people, an example is presented, so listen to it. Indeed, those you invoke besides Allah will never create [as much as] a fly, even if they gathered together for
that purpose. And if the fly should steal away from them a [tiny] thing, they could not recover it from him. Weak are the pursuer and pursued.

They have not appraised Allah with true appraisal. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might.

Allah chooses from the angels, messengers and from the people. Indeed, Allah is Hearing and Seeing.

He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them. And to Allah will be returned [all] matters.

O you, who have believed, bow and prostrate and worship your Lord and do good so that you may succeed.

And strive for Allah with the striving due to Him. He has chosen you and has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty. [It is] the religion of your father, Abraham. Allah named you “Muslims” before [in former scriptures] and in this [revelation] that the Messenger may be a witness over you and you may be witnesses over the people. So establish prayer and give zakah and hold fast to Allah. He is your protector; and excellent is the protector, and excellent is the helper.

(Quran 22.73-78)
In this section, which mainly takes inspiration from the last part of Surah Al-Hajj, we’ll talk about the big picture about volunteering and working together in the path of Allah.

**First, look at the message**

This passage begins with an address to humanity, ‘Oh mankind an example has been given.’

The first verse is talking about Allah’s power and human being’s weakness. Allah SWT tells us that an example is about to be given; so listen carefully.

It is in the passive or “majhool” form. There is no mention of the faa’il or the doer, i.e. the one who gave the example. It says ‘an example is given.’ The purpose of using the passive is to conceal the subject or the doer. The reason for doing so is that Allah is talking to a hostile crowd who had a biased approach. Had they been told straight away that this message is from Allah, they would have stopped listening further as their thinking would choke because of their association with their ‘gods’ that they made up from wood and stone. This was how the people of Makkah in the early days were addressed. In comparison, the audience in the Madni Quran was predominantly Muslim; so, in those verses Allah says, ‘Daraba Allahu masalun’ (‘Allah strikes an example’). Allah mentions his name when addressing the believers so that the believers
pay extra attention because of this, not less. But here, Allah highlights the speech or the content instead of the speaker.

The general population, tends to look, often unconsciously, at who’s talking and then we listen to what they have to say. We look at all the peripherals first and it’s very hard for us to look past that and hear the good thing being said by an unlikely source. This is the same reason, it is hard for the father of Ibraheem (A.S.) to accept what Ibraheem (A.S.) was saying even though what Ibraheem (A.S.) was talking about was absolute truth. Ibraheem (A.S.)’s father weighed his opinion and claims low, considering him ‘just a kid’ and thinking ‘how can I listen to a kid?’, what does he know?’

The attitude of the believers towards to the word of Allah, on contrary, should be what is mentioned in this famous statement attributed to Ali (R.A.): ‘We judge the speech, before we judge the speaker.’

**Today’s and yesterday’s gods – as powerless as their predecessors**

The core point here is that Allah gives us an example; so we should listen to it carefully.

‘No doubt, those that you are calling upon other than Allah (meaning false Gods) won’t be able to create a single fly even if they all got together for that purpose.’
So the example Allah gives is the powerlessness of idols and the powerlessness of false kings - kings who claim themselves to be gods! This clearly seems to have deep roots when we look at history. Thousands of years ago, there was a Firaun who said, ‘Ana rabukum al-aala’, ‘I am your supreme lord.’ He turned to his people and said, ‘I don’t see for you any God besides myself’, calling himself “the supreme lord”.

That sort of conception still appears in our day and age. We are living in crazy times. This ‘idolization’ of humans is not something restricted to the ancient times. It is happening in this day and age too. It is happening today in various shapes, forms and places. There are people who claim to be god now too! There are people who still wish to become ‘idol’ and there are others who ‘worship’ them! It’s happening in our lifetime. May Allah swt protect us all.

So, Allah says whether they are idols or human false gods, with all what they possess, they cannot even create a single fly like the one that Allah swt created.’

Let’s see the context for these ayahs to understand why the example of bee was mentioned. These verses were revealed in Makkah. The Mushrikoon used to worship idols. In pagan cultures people used to sacrifice animals or leave sweets, milk, honey and flowers etc. in front of these idols as a show of devotion. But what happens when you leave food out in the open? What shows up out of nowhere? Flies! A fly shows up
and drinks the chocolate milk or eats from the snickers bar in front of the idol and the big old statue smiling back at it can’t do anything. So the idea is that the foundation of their faith is that this idol is sacred and it has to be shown respect. But it gets disrespected in the highest temple by a lowly thing such as a fly! And they can’t do anything about it.

So the foundations of their faith are crumbled in front of their own eyes. Even if all of their so-called gods could get together, what could they do? How could they even catch a fly? And even on top of that, if a fly comes and takes something from the food of someone, like the Firaun of ancient Egypt or the Firauns of our time, what are they going to do? They can’t even get that little thing back. For this task, even if you line up all the best of the armies in the world, they can’t accomplish this apparently small task! It’s gone!

So, if the fly was to take something away from them, they wouldn’t be able to get it back. Allah teaches us that He can teach the lessons of His oneness and might even through a fly. If you just pay attention to the world around you, even a fly can give you guidance on tawheed. That’s one of the miracles of the Quran; it changes human perspectives. Once you understand this passage, you don’t look at this passage and read through as you used to before. It will change the way you see a fly buzzing around.
Our Inherent Weakness:

“Dafuu al Talib Wal Matloub”. ‘The one who is seeking and the one being sought are both weak”. The one who is seeking, a lover, a fan, a student; and the one who is sought, a celebrity, a singer, an actor, a sports start – they are all inherently weak. We are running after these people and things but they are weak, just like us.

In the passage under discussion, Allah swt first highlights our weakness. We can’t even get our things back from an apparently insignificant creature such as a fly. After this, Allah mentions, ‘They didn’t appreciate Allah as He deserves to be appreciated.’ We seek everything else except Allah who is actually the only One that we should be seeking! Why don’t we seek Allah? All that we are seeking other than him are weak. Why don’t we appreciate Allah as He deserves to be appreciated? Why are we running around everywhere else? Why is everything a pursuit for us but Allah is not our matloub? 

So far, it has been established that we are weak and the worldly things and people that we seek are weak too. We are running after them and not realizing that it is Allah swt in whose pursuit our success is. Allah swt then tells us that he is Al-Qawi and Al-Azeez. ‘He’s mighty; He’s strong; and He’s the Ultimate Authority! In many English translations the word “Azeez” is translated as “mighty” but the word Azeez combines two
things – “power and respect”. Someone who has “izza” (the word from the same root word as Azeez) has two elements - authority and respect. There are authorities in the world that don’t have respect and there are respectable figures that don’t have authority. But when you have both of these together, you have “izza”. Then you are Azeez. That is the meaning of Azeez which is one of the names of Allah swt.

You might be wondering what’s the link between this passage and our discussion regarding the volunteer work? This will become clear shortly.

Istifaa and Istijaab

Now as part of Allah’s might, He swt tells us that ‘He is the one who, purely of his own choice, selects messengers from the armies of the angels and among the legions of humanity.’

The word “Istafa” is at the heart of this discussion. ‘الله يصطفى من ’، ‘Allah Selects the messengers from the angels and from humans.’

Al-Istafa comes from word “safee” which refers to purity. Like, in Urdu, you have the word “saaf” meaning clean or pure. But when you make a choice that is purely your own and no one else influenced your choice, no one had any say in your choice, nobody gave you a suggestion, it was entirely and completely your own choice, than that kind of choice is called ‘al-istifaa’.
Let us understand this word from another analogy. Suppose I go to a grocery store and pick up a Kit-Kat. That’s istifa. It’s my own uninfluenced decision. If my wife asks me, ‘Why you didn’t buy a Bounty?’ I say, ‘Well, that’s my “istifaa”; I like Kit-Kat, that’s it. I like it. That’s the only reason.’ That’s istifa.

Now look at the next verse, Allah talks about us, Muslims. He swt says, ‘لا یتیب’. The English translations say, ‘Allah selects you.’ Note that the English word used for the translation of the word ‘Ijtiba’ is the same as the English word for translating the word ‘Istifa’. However, from the Arabic linguistic point of view, these two words contain different meanings. The word istifa (which was used for the messengers) means that it’s purely Allah’s choice; whereas, the word ijtiba means ‘to select someone based on qualifications or attributes’. For example, if you have a loose bolt on your kid’s bike, you open the tool box and select a spanner that is exactly the right size for the job. That’s ijtiba. When I select this spanner, I didn’t make istifaa but ijtiba. I chose the right tool for the right job. That’s what the word ijtiba means. Similarly, for example, when I’m going to hire somebody, I will interview ten people in order to select one person. I’m not going to make istifa; it doesn’t make any sense. I’m going to make ijtiba. I’m going to pick the right person for the right job. So Allah used a different word when he talked about you and me being Muslim. He used a word which suggests that he picked me and he picked you to be able to say La-illaha illa Allah, Muhammadun ﷺ.
Rasullallah. Why? Because he sees us fit for the job. He’s got something in mind for us - for you and for me - and he sees that we are perfectly fit for that task; so he picked us. Think for a second. Shouldn’t it be a big priority for us, then, to figure out what Allah wants us to do? What He wants me to?

Utilize all what you have for the job you are assigned to do

Allah swt commands us in Surah Hadeed:

آمنوا بالله ورسوله وانفقوا منا جعلكم من مستخلفين فيه فألذين آمنا منكم وانفقا لهم أجورا كبير

Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and donate from what He has entrusted you with. So those of you who believe and donate will have a mighty reward. (Quran 57:7)

The words ‘what He has entrusted you with’ cover every resource at your disposal. It covers whatever talents you have been given, whatever abilities you have been given, whatever financial resources you have been given, whatever social position you have been handed and so on. Use whatever you’ve got at your disposal and spend it for Allah, your Master. That’s the demand of Allah in Surah Hadeed.

In the verse under discussion in this chapter, Allah swt is letting you know that you have been chosen for a particular task. You are not just a random selection to be a Muslim; you are an ‘ijtiba’. Each and every one of us has a role to play and
we have to figure out what it’s going to be. That requires a
depth assessment of oneself. That’s why Allah swt chose you.

We skipped some part of the ayah to explain the difference
between istifa and ijtiba. Let’s go back now and balance the
equation again.

Allah (swt) says, ‘He knows whatever is in front of them and
whatever’s behind them and to Allah all decisions are
returned.’ The word for decisions is ‘amoor’. This comes from
‘amr’ which means actions that were made with a specific
and deliberate purpose. All such decisions will be returned to
Allah and after issuing this warning to humanity, the believers
are addressed. I want you to understand this transition. It’s a
very heavy and powerful transition. Let’s look at the flow
again.

In the first part of this passage Allah swt is displeased with
humanity. They are calling upon false gods. They don’t even
understand the simplicity of tawheed. Even though something
as simple as a fly can teach them that lesson. They don’t
appreciate Allah as he deserves to be appreciated. On top
of that even though a fly should have been enough to teach
them about Allah, He sent messengers anyway. But they still
didn’t understand. Don’t they realise that everything that they
do in the past, the present and the future is on record? So they
are in some serious trouble. Humanity is in serious trouble.
Now Allah says, If you care about each other you would be worried about the ultimate destiny of your fellow human beings. By default humans care about each other; that’s just part of who we are by our natural disposition or fitrah. By the way, the word insaan is from uns, as pointed out by various scholars, which means that it is a creature full of compassion. We can’t but help feel compassion for others. However, this trait and feeling of concern for others have been eroded or even taken out of our system gradually and slowly in our time. We have become desensitized. Otherwise we are originally programmed to feel compassion for others like us. We are supposed to be bothered when we see somebody in pain. We are supposed to be concerned when someone else is suffering. But in modern educated, advanced, liberal and so-called humane civilised society, whether in the east or west, many people walk right by when they see someone lying on the pavement in pain. That’s how we’ve been desensitized, or de-humanized. It’s almost like if it’s happening behind a screen for us. The major reason is because we see so many people dying, being injured or hurt on TV, in games and in movies that we think everything is a movie. Our life also becomes like a movie. So when we see something which bothers us, we just change the channel. That’s how we have become - completely de-sensitized from our position of being genuine, caring, compassionate human beings.
But if you have still got some sensitivity left in you as a human, you will realise that you have a lot to do. And one of the most important aspects of caring for others is to remind them of their ultimate destination.

Who is responsible for this task of telling humanity that they are going to stand before Allah one day and answer for their deeds? Who is going to let them know? The messengers are not going to come anymore. The final Messengerﷺ has left after doing his job. The companions have played their part. It’s on our shoulders now! It’s up to me and you now! So let us begin with ourselves.

**Start the effort by fixing yourself**

Allah swt tells us,

\[
\text{‘O you who believe, make ruku, make sajdah, make yourselves slaves to your Master.’}
\]

The ruku and sujood are part of what act? Salat or prayers which is a physical manner of submission to Allah swt. So, the physical acts are being highlighted here.

If you see it from a non-Muslim point of view, when they see somebody making ruku, they think this guy is tired. ‘Why is he on his knees like that? He’s probably exhausted.’ When
sprinters run and they’re exhausted, what do they do? They go in to ‘ruku’ on their knees to catch their breath. So when we humble ourselves in Ruku and sujood, the Muslims say, ‘Ya Allah, before you I have no strength.’ We give ourselves up in salat. Our obedience physically, from one act of obedience to another, is supposed to be reflected in our life. The more we grow as Muslims, the more humble and closer to Allah swt we are supposed to become. That’s what is supposed to happen over time in our worship and that’s when we finally, through salat, reach the state of ibadaah.

Ibadah is not an act. It’s a state of being. It’s a maqaam. It is to be a slave. We’ll reach the point where we understand, internalise and accept deep down inside us that we are slaves, and that we have a master; we become content in that state. Salat will get us there.

It is unfortunate that we have many groups and organizations whose members have been working for many years but when you look at their prayers and other acts of worship, they are of a very poor standard and I have come across some members of the big organizations who hardly prayed Fajr on time and some who didn’t even pray the five prayers!

By Allah you and I will not be able to do any good to anybody until we realise that we are nothing but slaves. This has to reflect in our way of life. There is no job on this planet which is lower than slavery. At the same time, there is no position or
rank higher than the master. So when we say, ‘I’ve accepted my self as abd’, then I’ve accepted that there’s no one higher than Allah and there’s no one lower than myself as His ‘abd’. That’s what I have accepted. And when I’ve come to terms with that internally or psychologically and it’s not just something that I say but something I’ve accepted deep in the soul of my being, then I’m ready to do good. Now I’m ready to help others.

**Attitude of an abd**

So what is the concern? You really want to do work? You want to be a volunteer? You want to help in a cause, or a dawah programme or an educational programme, an Islamic school, a media group or whatever? What is the first step? First get your ibadah in order. And ibadah doesn’t just mean the acts of worship. That’s the starting point that leads you to the state of it. Once you reach that state of ibadah, the doors of goodness will open for you. This is because when you are a slave, your pride and ego is gone. All you care is about is making the master happy. That’s all that’s on your mind. You’ve got nothing else in front of you. And when people say something that bothers you, you just leave it to Allah. Aoofawedoo amree ilallah in Allah ha basirun bilibaad.

Now you’re ok. You are just concerned about what you’ve got to do. Things don’t get under your skin or bother you anymore. Now you don’t complain and say things like, ‘I cant
believe they said this or I’m never doing this again,’ or, ‘I did so much but no one appreciated me or that guy said this about me.’ Remember you are a slave. People can say whatever they want. You only have to answer to your master. That’s it. You should have no complaints with people.

**Doing good to others**

واعفوا الخير لعِمَّكم نلِخون

‘And do good so that you can succeed.’

After, fixing ourselves, we then have a responsibility to do good to others. Why? Lallakum tuftihoon! ‘So that you can attain true success!’

This ayah also related to our earlier discussion. I said that Islam is concerned with something more than the individual reform. This mission is concerned with more than just working on yourself. Otherwise, Allah swt would not have mentioned anything other than the rukoo, sujood and the obadah. That’s working on yourself. When He says, ‘Do good.’ What does it mean? Do good to who? To others of-course! If you really want to be successful then you have to be helpful to others. Remember, when you do good to others its not only for them but its also for yourself.
An important warning for all volunteers

So, our voluntary contributions in whatever way shape or form are actually efforts to help ourselves. Don’t ever think about the time you gave to a masjid or for a programme or a convention or a cheque you wrote for the school or the youth club or whatever and say, ‘I helped such and such.’ In reality, you only helped yourself! The moment I say, ‘I helped them’, it doesn’t count for me anymore. If we claim it this way, we might not have it in our account in the aakhirah. You can’t have it both ways. Allah only counts one intention. So, if you are going to give, whether it is time, money, effort, suggestions, and so on, expect returns only from Allah. If you expect anything from anyone else, then know that Allah doesn’t like shared intentions. He wants his attention to be exclusive. You try to put anybody else, yourself, or some other agenda in that attention, its gone. It doesn’t count for anything.

As the Islamic organisations such as schools, dawah organisations, publishers and so on are donation-dependant, we sometimes see that somebody writes a cheque for $20,000, and all of a sudden shaytan comes to them and says, ‘Mabrook!’ Then he says, ‘By the way, why don’t you give them a suggestion about the colour of the carpet? I mean, after all, you wrote a big cheque! You should have some weight in your opinion; so go and give a suggestion.’ You didn’t give a suggestion before you wrote the cheque; but all
of a sudden your opinion has got $20,000 heavier. So you want to give an opinion and you are expecting your opinion to be taken more seriously now because you gave some money. So your intention for giving the money was not to please Allah any more. It was for getting your opinion to weigh a little more, and that’s all you will get out of that sadaqa. Is it worth it? Think about that. Don’t ruin your sadaqa which you give in any cause by tying your contributions to expectations.

Do not waste your charity with reminders (of your generosity) or hurtful words, like those who donate their wealth just to show off. (Quran 2:264)

If you want to have expectations, have them with Allah. Personally, when I write a cheque for sadaqa, I write a little reminder on the top of the cheque, ma naqasin mallin min sadakatin, ‘wealth doesn’t decrease because of sadaka’. I remind myself, ‘Who am I giving sadaqa to?’ I’m actually depositing it in my akhira account; I remind myself that withdrawal is going to happen after I go into the dirt. You try to withdraw now, you won’t get anything later.

**Strive in the cause of Allah swt the way you are supposed to strive**

Allah swt then says وَجَاهَنَا فِي اَللهِ خَصِّ جَهَادِهِ. This deals with our attitude.
Islam is not the only religion which has spirituality. The Christians and the Buddhists and other religions have powerful spiritual traditions too. However, we do claim to have spirituality that is for a bigger purpose.

Let’s take the example of planting a plant in the soil. You make sure it gets plenty of sun and you put plenty of water on it. That is fixing the soil. But what is the point of all these exercises and efforts if you don’t plant a seed in the soil! So, after fixing the soil, you have to put a seed in. The purpose of putting in a seed is so that it grows into a plant and eventually into a tree. When it grows into a tree, it’ll give fruits that’ll benefit yourself and others.

We working on ourselves is like fixing the soil, removing the weeds, making sure it gets plenty of sunlight. It is like doing zikr for our nafs but if we don’t put the seed of working for the deen of Islam in these soil, what’s the point of all that spirituality? Our spirituality is driven by purpose! Your purpose is supposed to drive that closeness to Allah with some solid contributions. These contributions can be various shapes or forms. For a mother who is so busy taking care of her children, her contribution may just be her kids. For a writer, it may be his authorship. For a poet, it maybe his creative writing which inspires the Muslims. It can manifest in many different ways but it must come out! You have to work for the deen of Allah.
Seriousness of Islamic volunteer work

How seriously should you take an Islamic volunteer effort? It is not befitting that voluntary efforts are not accorded the same level of seriousness and commitment as other areas of life.

You have a meeting at 7pm. You’d be lucky if somebody shows up by 7.30pm. And that’s one off meetings. If it’s every week, then inna lilahe wa inna elahi rajoon! The general attitude is, ‘it’s voluntary, who cares?’ It’s not as if you are getting paid for it. But if you understand this ayat then you’ll realise that voluntary work done for the sake of Allah has more weight than anything! Nothing else you do pays as high as this work and is as beneficial to yourself as this! The parable of those who spend their wealth in God’s way is that of a grain that produces seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. God multiplies for whom He wills. God is Bounteous and Knowing. (Quran 2:261)

How to deal with ‘boring tasks’

Before I close this session, let me tell you something very serious. Islamic work can get pretty boring at times. It may seem unfulfilling at times. Who wants to sit there and make a hundred copies of a flyer? That’s not going to increase your imaan or is it? You press the green button on the copier and watch the flashing light go to and fro. Who enjoys doing that? Who enjoys sitting in a two hour meeting discussing the
architects plans for the parking area of the masjid? It’s called a masjid “board” meeting for a reason; it makes you bored! It does appear to be a very fulfilling work.

If you ever develop that feeling, remind yourself of your intentions. Before you walk into that meeting or that menial task, you should remind yourself, ‘I’m not doing this for the Youth Club or the MSA or anybody else; I am doing this for Allah and the only one I want appreciation from is Him!’ If you do that, then you will have a great time. You’ll enjoy every minute of it. So you have to walk in with the right intention. No task is too small in the eyes of Allah swt.

**Keep renewing your intentions**

It is also to be remembered that the intentions are not one-off things which are decided at the beginning and then they don’t change. They get rusty pretty fast. Maybe you came in with good intentions but twenty minutes into the meeting, your good intention disappears and turns into a monster. So you have to constantly refresh the intentions like you clean the windscreen of your car on a rainy day. You have to fix it again and again because you can forget why you were there. You have to constantly remind yourself, ‘I’m here for Allah. I’m here for a higher purpose. I’m not here just for myself.’

So, He (swt) says, ‘Struggle for the sake of Allah.’; that struggle should be with no goal before you except Allah. As though
the only one before you is Allah. And put in the best effort in it as He deserves.

**You are chosen for that struggle**

The passage continues and Allah swt says, “He chose you”. These are the words I explained before. He especially crafted you, shaped you, and selected you for a task.

And don’t you for a minute start thinking this work is too good for you; or that you are not good enough to do this work. Because Allah swt tells us that he didn’t put any difficulty for you in your religion. He didn’t put this religion on you so that you could be uncomfortable (like monasticism in Christianity, for instance).

**Legacy of Ibrahim A.S.**

You and I have to remember that we are the legacy of Ibraheem (A.S.) - . Before Allah motivates you and me to struggle, He makes us realise that we are from the family and nation of Ibraheem (A.S.). His struggle for Allah’s cause is a role model for us. His family and their struggle is a role model for us. It is also to be noted that if anybody had a right to question Allah’s orders, it would have been Ibraheem (A.S.) more than anybody else in the world. He could have asked, ‘Jumping into the fire? what’s the point of this exercise?’ Is this really necessary? Fire? Really?’ or ‘Put a knife to my son’s
throat? My son? Really? He had to leave his family in the middle of the desert. When we go to hajj we see all these people doing saee between Safa and Marwa. The original saee is a sunnah of a woman, the wife of Ibraheem (A.S.) and she’d given birth recently; so she’s not physically in her peak form and she’s running around to find water for her son. There were no air conditioners, no tiled floors, and no water coolers on the sides with cold zam-zam water in them at that time! Imagine the situation. That’s the struggle that our father Ibraheem (A.S.) and his family did.

**The true children of Ibrahim A.S. would not be the complainers**

Allah says that you are from that family! You should have an appreciation for struggle for Islam; if Ibraheem (A.S.) and Hagarah and Ismaeel (may Allah’s peace be upon them all) didn’t complain, what are you and I complaining about?

What are our complains? Meetings are too long? The tasks given to us are boring? Put these complains in context of our role models. What did Ibrahim A.S. and his family went through for Islam. What did the Prophet ﷺ and his companions had to bear for this religion? What were the sacrifices of our earlier generations for this deen? How do our complains compare with their struggle!
All what you do, Allah knows about it

Whatever good you do Allah will know it. Don’t worry about that at all. People might not notice but Allah will. Allah will know. That’s the power of intention.

There was a woman who used to sweep the Masjid An-Nabawi. People didn’t even know her name and when the Prophet ﷺ came to know that she had passed away, he cried. You know how high her rank is? She wasn’t a celebrity, she wasn’t a speaker, she wasn’t an alima, she didn’t have that glory in the materialistic sense. Nobody knew her name even; but she was grand before Allah. Our attitude towards Islamic work should be that the one who needs to appreciate it definitely appreciates, no matter if no one else does.

The messenger will be a witness against us

In the last part of the passage, Allah swt says

ليكون الرسول شهيدا عليكم وكونوا شهداء على الناس

He says, le yakoono rasulun alaikum shaheeda. ‘So that the Messenger ﷺ will be a witness over you.’ He will be a witness against us on the day of Judgement. If we don’t take the work of our deen seriously, the one who is a mercy to mankind will bear witness against us!
We are sandwiched between humanity and the Messenger ﷺ. On the one hand the Messenger ﷺ will complain that they didn’t do what I instructed them or asked them to do. On the other hand humanity might complain against us that we never got the message of truth from these people. We didn’t know Islam was a beautiful way of life.

However, if we do pay heed and devote ourselves to this duty, we may be able to make a claim in the hereafter that we tried our best to do the job assigned to us. If we ignore this call, the messenger ﷺ would himself be a witness against us on the day of judgement. We should accordingly take this job of ours very very seriously.

**Three key responsibilities of Muslim community**

And by work of deen, I mean the thousands of projects out there as I explained earlier - not just one thing. Find yourself a noble cause and commit yourself to it. All of us don’t have to struggle for the same thing. Ascertain what you are good at and what you believe in and what you feel is needed for the ummah which is not being fulfilled. Once you find it, do it and dedicate yourself to it.

In my mind, there are three kinds of services Muslims need to work on in present times, in order of priority:

1. Education (includes dawah, self-development, community projects and so on)
2. Social /Community Work
3. Protection of Muslim Community.

Working on education encompasses educating ourselves and others about our deen in any way shape or form. It starts with ourselves, our families and then others. That’s one grand area under which a lot of sub-projects can exist. Dawah, schooling and other aspects fall under this broad umbrella too.

Social/Community Work is helping people Muslim or non-Muslims in the locality or neighbourhood; for example cleaning up the area, providing meals for the hungry, helping out at the old people’s homes and so on. It’s helping the humanity.

Protection involves doing something that protects the community, our children, our institutions, marriages, families, our civil liberties, our religious freedom etc. This is another very important task.

These are three of the important areas where we can contribute. These are all worthy causes. Some people might engage in one and the others can contribute towards others; just like in the battlefield during the time of the Prophet ﷺ, you had people who were engaged with the enemy, others who took care of the sick, others who were providing food and water, others who were carrying off the injured and sick to points of safety and there were people who were guarding
the Prophet ﷺ. All these were important tasks. So, we have these areas that we have to concern ourselves with and give ourselves to. We have to be volunteers.

**Train your children to volunteer**

We also have to train our kids to be volunteers. When your kids turn eleven or twelve, they should be volunteering. You should bring them to the masjid to serve the fasters or the saimeen during Ramadan. Our kids should learn to volunteer at an early age. They should learn to help others. We should be taking them to visit the old and the sick. We should take them to the grocery store to shop, not just for themselves but to buy something, sweets or toys or so on, to give to the needy members of the community. We have to instil these values in ourselves and in our children.

**Keep the priorities right**

Nowadays, a lot of Muslims try to skip these three areas of Islamic work and go into something deemed more exciting; public relations (PR) for Islam trying to ‘improve the image of Islam in the eyes of the people’, especially the westerners. They use slogans like, ‘we are not extreme, Islam is really moderate and humane. Like us, please.’

If we actually acted and behaved like Muslims we wouldn’t have to do PR. Our neighbours would testify for us; we wouldn’t have to.
Our job is to stand up for our deen and Allah will take care of our protection. Allah will take care of our PR. So, keep your priorities straight.

**Hold onto Allah**

At the end of the passage Allah says,

‘Establish prayer, give zakat and hold onto Allah.’

What does holding onto Allah mean? It means tie your hopes with Allah. Tie your expectations with Allah. Be in direct regular conversation with Allah. Don’t ever let go of that. He is the one protecting you.

What a great ‘Maula’ or protector you have. What an awesome protector you have. Someone who is going to give you mawlaat and Naseer - Protection and help.

**First you do your job, then the help of Allah will arrive**

Nusrah, the word from which Allah’s name ‘An-Naseer’ is derived, means ‘a great help’.

What a great helped is he.
Allah swt says, when you start doing the work of my deen, I
will help you like nobody else can help you. I will energise you
like nobody else can energise you. That’s his promise. This is a
formulae from Allah. You put in your struggle for Allah, then
help from Allah comes. We have numerous examples of this
from the Quran and Sunnah. Muslims stood in the battlefield
of Badr first, then an army of angels came down from heaven.
The angels were not there fighting on their behalf when they
themselves were not there. It’s not like that. You have to go
into the fight then they will show up. Then the help will come.
Ibraheem (A.S.) jumped into the fire, then Allah made it
cooled down with salamah. It wasn’t cool ahead of time. It
cooled down once he made the jump and when he did his
bit. You want Allah’s help? Do you your job first. Get out there
in the arena. This is the formulae Allah has taught us in the
Quran. It is true at the individual as well as the community or
group level. You take one step, Allah will take ten steps
towards you. So, we have to make the struggle to be worthy
of the help from Allah to come. This is the conclusion of this
session.