THE EXCELLENCE OF WARNING

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Abstract*: Just as giving good tidings has a profound, lasting, and exhilarating effect on righteous souls and eloquent ears, so does warning have a shocking and awakening effect, and consequently a deterrent and forcing effect and this itself is reckoned to be one of the factors that guide human beings. The present article deals with warning given in the holy book "Quran".*

Key words*: Quran, good tidings, warning*

Introduction

Just as giving good tidings has a profound, lasting, and exhilarating effect on righteous souls and eloquent ears, so does warning have a shocking and awakening effect, and consequently a deterrent and forcing effect and this itself is reckoned to be

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one of the factors that guide human beings.

Therefore, just as God, the Almighty and Exalted He is, mentions good tidings as a means of guidance, similarly, He mentions the power of warning as a source of guidance.

First of all, let us remind you that according to many verses of the Qur'an, most people possess such characteristics due to which God employs the weapon of warning. We name those features as below:

Most people are ignorant of most things:

…but most of the people do not know."[1]

Many people do not listen to advice and do not use their wisdom

Do you think that most of them hear or understand?[2]

Most people are ungrateful.

But most of the people do not show gratitude.[3]

Most people are heedless.

And indeed, many among the people are heedless of Our signs.[4]

Most people are unbelievers

But most of the people do not believe.[5]

Many people deny the Resurrection Day.

And indeed, many of the people, in [the matter of] the meeting with their Lord, are disbelievers.[6]

Most people are polytheists.

Travel in the land, then see how was the end of those before you; most of them were those who associated others with Allah.[7]

Most people are misled and misguide others.

And if you obey most of those upon the earth, they will mislead you from the way of Allah.[8]

Most people are transgressors.

And indeed, many among the people are transgressors.[9]

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Most people do not recognize the truth.

But most of them do not know the truth, so they turn aside.[10]

Therefore, despite all the efforts of the prophets, many people still remained disbelievers.

Therefore, God used the weapon of warning, so that perhaps by this means, such people will come to their senses and tread the path of guidance and worship the true God. However, if they fail on this path and God now wishes to punish or even destroy them, He would do so since He had already given them an ultimatum and finalized the argument for them.

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One of the divine traditions (as ordained by God Himself) is that:

And there was no nation but that there had passed within it a warner.[11]

Apparently, such a tradition too isn't any exceptional. That is, there must have been a warner among all the nations.

But God says about (قَرْيَةٍ) a town (which is a smaller unit than (امة) a nation)

And if We had willed, We could have sent into every town a warner.[12]

Of course, in case the townsfolk have to perish due to defiance and rebellion, the torment will not descend until the argument against them is completed.

And We did not destroy any except that it had warners.[13]

On the Day of Judgment, when a group is set into the fire, the agents of Hell will ask them: "Did not a warner come to you to warn you of such a fateful end? They will reply: Yes, a warner came, but we denied him."[14]

This ultimatum is because before any warner came, the disbelievers and polytheists had taken a firm oath that if a warner comes, they will be more guided than anyone else. However, when the warner really came, they turned their back on him.[15]

In short, with the coming of the prophets (or other warners),[16] there is

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no punishment for those who have not been warned or given any ultimatum.

The prophets are considered to be the main warning agents. This matter, has been one of the important philosophy of sending these nobles.

And We send not the messengers except as bringers of good tidings and warners.[17]

Sending messengers was amongst both jinn and humans.

"O company of jinn and mankind, did there not come to you messengers from among you, relating to you My verses and warning you of the meeting of this Day of yours?"[18]

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The leader of all warners and messengers and the last of them, Hazrat Muhammad-ibn-Abdullah was commissioned to this important affair when a long time had passed since any warner had come among his people.[19]

Therefore, the first command he received after his appointment was:

O you enveloped in your cloak, arise and warn.[20]

An order issued about open invitation stated that:

And warn, [O Muhammad], your closest kindred.[21]

Due to the special characteristics that we enumerated about the general people (especially the infidels) due to the necessity of the invitation, the warning show was much more obvious during the time of Mecca.

Therefore, about the verses revealed in Mecca, the tone of verses is sharp, hair-raising, alarming and awakening.

And such verses were revealed in abundance at that time. Numerous other verses indicate that the most important duty of the Prophet was to warn the people, as God addresses him as below:

Say, "O people, I am only to you a clear warner."[22]

As we have already mentioned, the warning of the disbelievers is more

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for the sake of finalization of argument against them, because many of them pay no heed to the Prophet's warning. As God cautions the Prophet:

Indeed, those who disbelieve - it is all the same for them whether you warn them or do not warn them - they will not believe.[23]

Hence, the effect of warning is confined to those who have an appropriate and favorable background

You can only warn one who follows the message and fears the Most Merciful unseen.[24]

Again, we need to remind that the Prophet, as per the duty assigned to him by God, has the duty of warning the people.

For the stubborn and obstinate disbelievers, the result of this warning is finalization of God's argument over them and perhaps reawakening of a few amongst them. However, to those who do not intend to be rebellious, obstinate and stubborn, it (i.e. warning) is vigilance, awakening and guidance towards faith.

The topics that have an awakening and warning effect and are mentioned in the Qur'an are mainly:

Warning regarding monotheism:

(God commands His prophets, telling them:) "Warn that there is no deity except Me; so fear Me."[25]

Warning about the calamities that befell on previous nations:

But if they (disbelievers) turn away, then say, "I warn you of a thunderbolt like the thunderbolt [that struck] 'Aad and Thamud.[26]

Warning about the Day of Judgment and reckoning on that day and about torment and hell:

And warn them, [O Muhammad], of the Approaching Day[27]

And warn them, [O Muhammad], of the Day of Regret[28]

And warn of the Day of gathering[29]

And, [O Muhammad], warn the people of a Day when the punishment will come to them[30]

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Indeed, We have warned you of a near punishment on the Day when a man will observe what his hands have put forth[31]

So I have warned you of a Fire which is blazing.[32]

The Prophet's main weapon for the warning is the Qur'an. That is, the holy Prophet would give glad tidings as well as warn the people through the holy verses of the Qur'an.

This is how we describe the attributes of warning for the Qur'an:

God attributes warning (through the Qur'an) first and foremost to Himself

Indeed, We sent it (Qur'an) down during a blessed night. Indeed, We were to warn [mankind].[33]

This act of warning through the Qur'an is attributed to the Qur'an itself

And this is a confirming Book in an Arabic tongue to warn those who have wronged and as good tidings to the doers of good.[34]

Finally, this mission of warning via the Qu'ran is attributed to the holy Prophet

And thus We have revealed to you an Arabic Qur'an that you may warn the Mother of Cities [Makkah] and those around it and warn of the Day of gathering, about which there is no doubt.[35]

As mentioned before, the Qur'an warned people at a time when there hadn't come a warner for a long time.[36]

Rather, it is the truth from your Lord, [O Muhammad], that you may warn a people to whom no warner has come before you.[37]

In addition to encompassing the common people, the Qur'an directs its warning on a specific group.

So, [O Muhammad], We have only made Qur'an easy in the Arabic language that you may give good tidings thereby to the righteous and warn thereby a hostile people.[38]

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And this is a confirming Book in an Arabic tongue to warn those who have wronged.[39]

And to warn those who say, " Allah has taken a son."[40]

The disbelievers were astonished at the revelation to a man like themselves who had the duty of warning them; hence they denied him.

By the honored Qur'an... But they wonder that there has come to them a warner from among themselves, and the disbelievers say, "This is an amazing thing.[41]

The Qur'an is a book that warns all free and living beings.

It is not but a message and a clear Qur'an to warn whoever is truly alive and justify the word[42]

The warning of the Qur'an is for all times and places

Blessed is He who sent down the Qur'an upon His Servant that he may be a warner to the worlds.[43]

Moreover, warning through the Qur'an in the post Prophet era is undertaken by the Prophet's 'Itrat', who are the bearers of the Qur'an, that is, the guiding Imams.

And this Qur'an was revealed to me that I may warn you thereby and whomever it reaches.[44]

Finally, the religious jurists and the bearers of the sciences of the Ahl al-Bayt are also responsible for warning.

Then why should not a party from each group go forth that they may gain understanding in religion and warn their people when they return to them.[45]

To sum up, one of the most important factors in guiding human beings or finalizing the argument against them, which the prophets have used abundantly, is warning people of the consequences of their wrong, polytheistic and blasphemous thoughts.

The issue of warning is so important that, firstly, there was a warner among all the nations and secondly, the punishment of the

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evildoers took place only after the warning.

The main and very important duty of the holy prophet too has been mainly to warn the people and he has warned the people regarding two vital issues: One not to associate anyone with Allah and the other to have belief in the Resurrection Day.

Finally, the Qur'an is an eternal charter for warning human-beings, and after the Prophet, the duty of warning is primarily borne by the heirs of the sciences of the Qur'an, namely the Imams of guidance, and secondly by the jurists and bearers of the sciences of the Ahl al-Bayt.

[1] A'raf(7): 187 and also A'raf:131; A'nam(6): 37 & 111; Anfal(8): 34; Yunus(10): 55; Yusuf(12): 21, 40 & 68; Nahl(16): 38, 75 & 101; Anbiyah(21): 24; Naml(27): 61; Qasas(28): 13 & 57; Rum(30): 6 & 30; Luqman(31): 25; Saba(34): 28 & 36; Zumur(39): 29 & 49; Ghafir(40): 57; Dhukhan(44): 39; Jasiyah(45): 26; Tur(52): 47

[2] Furqan(25): 44; Maedah(5): 103 & 71; Ankabut(29): 63; Hujurat(49): 4; Fusalat(41): 4

[3] Baqarah(2): 243; A'raf(7): 17; Yunus(10): 60; Yusuf(:): 38; Naml(27): 73; Ghafir(40): 61

[4] Yunus(10): 92; A'raf(7): 179

[5] Hud(11): 17; Ra'd(13): 1; Ghafir(40): 59; Baqarah(2): 100; Yusuf(12): 103; Yasin(36): 7; Shura(26): 8, 67, 103, 121, 139, 158, 174 & 190. In Surah Al-Shu'ara, Allah says to the Prophet that the disbelievers still do not believe despite seeing the signs of God's Power and the signs of His prophethood. Then, about this lack of people's faith, He say, "But most of them do not believe." Thereafter, He narrates the story of Moses and Pharaoh, Abraham and the unbelievers of Babylon, Noah and his people, Hud and Aad, Saleh and Thamud, Lot and his corrupt nation and Shoaib and the rebellious people of his time. At the end of each of these stories, by repeating the verse, *"But most of them do not believe"*, He states that despite the persistent

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efforts of the prophets, most people do not believe.

[6] Rum(30): 8

[7] Rum(30): 42; Yusuf(12): 106; However, this verse over here is referring to polytheism in obedience and not polytheism in worship. (Kafi 2:397). Polytheism in obedience is an affliction that affects even the believers.

[8] Mae'da(5):77; An'am(6):116 & 119; Ibrahim(14):36; Yasin(36):62; Nuh(71):24; Saafaat(37);71

[9] Mae'da(5):49, 59 & 81; Aale-Imran(3):110; A'raf(7):102; Hadid(57):16, 26 & 27; Taubah(9):8

[10] Anbiyah(21):24

[11] Faatir(35):24; Nahl(16):36

[12] Furqan(25):51

[13] Shu'ra(26):208; In the Quran, God reminds us of nations who were warned by the prophets, but since they denied and mocked the warners, after the finalization of divine argument over them, He punished them with annihilation. Among these nations are:

(a) Firstly, Noah's nation: Nuh(71):1-27; Hud(11):25-48; Yunus(10):71-73; Shu'ra(26):105-121; Qamar(54):18-21

(b) Secondly, Hud's nation: Ahkaf(46):21-27; Qamar(54):18-21

(c) Thirdly, Saleh's nation: Hijr(15):80-84; (these verses talk of Hijr's companions the same Saleh's nation; Qamar(54):23-31

(d) Fourthly, Lut's nation: Hijr(15):57-77; Qamar(54):33-39; Naml(27):54-58; Shu'ra(26):160-173

(e) Fifthly, the tribe of Tubba: Dhukhan(44):37; Qaaf(50):14

(f) Sixthly, Shuaib's nation: A'raf(7):85-93; Hud(11):84-95; Hijr(15):78-79; Shu'ra(26):76-190; Ankabut(29):36-37

(g) Seventhly, the tribe of Saba: Saba(34):15 & 16.

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(h) Eighthly, Pharaoh's (Firon) people: Qamar(54):41

[14] Mulk(67):8-9

[15] Fatir(35):42

[16] As per some noble verses, besides the prophets, there were other warners too. See Tauba(9):122; Ahkaf(46):29; Yasin(36):20

[17] An'am(6):48; Kahf(18):56

[18] An'am(6):130; That the messengers were sent among the Jinn is meant that messengers were sent to them by the divine messengers and not that prophets were appointed among the Jinn for prophetic mission. (Bihar-ul-Anwar 7:143)

[19] Alláh sent the Prophet when the mission of other Prophets had stopped and the peoples were in slumber for a long time. (Nahjul-Balagha, 221: sermon 88)

[20] Mudassir(74):1-2

[21] Shu'ra(26):214

[22] Haj(22):49 This vital issue has come down in other verses too – Baqarah(2):119; A'raf(7):184 & 188; Hud(11):2; Hud(11):12; Ra'd(13):7; Hijr(15):89; Bani-Israel(17):105; Furqan(25):1; Furqan(25):56; Qasas(28):46; Ankabut(29):50; Sajdah(32):3; Ahzab(33):45; Saba(34):28 & 46; Fatir(35):23; Saad(38):65 & 70; Ahqaf(46):9; Fath(48):8; Najm(53):56; Mulk(67):26

[23] Baqarah(2):6; Yasin(36):10; Also, "Those who disbelieve, from that of which they are warned, are turning away" Ahqaf(46):3; Fatir(35):42; Anbiyah(21):45

[24] Yasin(36):11 and also Fatir(35):18; Naziat(79):45; An'am(6):51; Since one of the names of Amir al-Mu'minin in the Qur'an is "zhikr", about the verse مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الذِّكْرَ is meant 'the one who follows Amir al-Mu'minin' Kafi(1:431); And about وَخَشِيَ الرَّحْمٰنَ بِالْغَيْبِ it means 'the one who fears the unseen Lord' or 'fears his Lord in privacy and is cautious. (Bihar-ul-Anwar 8:101).

[25] Nahl(16):2

[26] Fussilat(41):13

[27] Ghafir(40):18

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[28] Maryam(19):39; also Ghafir(40):15; '.....so as to warn them of the Day of meeting.'

[29] Shura(42):7

[30] Ibrahim(14):44

[31] Nab'a(78):40

[32] Lail(92):14

[33] Dhukhan(44):3

[34] Ahkhaf(46):12

[35] Shura(42):7; Ana'm(6):92; Also, A'raf(7):2 'A Book revealed to you. Let there be no impediment in your heart on that account. (It has been revealed to you) that you may thereby warn.'

[36] Maeda(5):19 – "Indeed Our Messenger has come to you explaining to you after a cessation during which there were no messengers, lest you say: There came not to us a giver of good news or a warner, so indeed there has come to you a giver of good news and a warner."

[37] Sajdah(32):3 and also Qasas(28):46; Yasin(36):6

[38] Maryam(19):97

[39] Ahkhaf(46):12

[40] Kahf(18):4

[41] Qaaf(50): 1 & 2. Also, Saad(38):4; Yunus(10):2; This wonder and disbelief has been expressed by nations of Hazrat Nuh and Hud too. The content of subsequent verse (that quotes the words of disbelievers) reveals how they were amazed at the prophet's call to the Unique God and regarding his talks about resurrection. In other words, as previously mentioned, the subject of warning was mainly focused on monotheism and resurrection.

[42] Yasin(36): 69 & 70; It is stated in Majma'al-Bayan: "It's possible that by *'whoever is truly alive'* is meant the one possessing wisdom and the same concept has been narrated from Imam Ali (a.s.)

[43] Furqan(25):1

[44] An'am(6);19; As Imam Sadiq(a.s.) said, "The one from Aale-Muhammad who attains Imamate warns the people by the holy Quran just as the Prophet used to warn by the Quran." (Kafi 1:416 & 426); Basa'ir al-Darajat 511; Tafsir-Ayyashi 1:356; Tafsir-Qummi 1:195; However, the noble verse has another meaning too

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which shall be mentioned at its proper place.

[45] Tauba(9):122. Imam Sadiq (a.s.) has said, "Gain a deep understanding in religion, because if any of you do not do that, he is like the Arab desert dweller (ignorant). Allah mentions in His Book, …that they may gain understanding in religion and warn their people after they return to them.

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