



Responsible Use of Technology and Social Media

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Technology and social media are changing the world at an unimaginable pace. In these times of digital dependence, most people (including many children) live with a technological device (particularly mobile phone and smart television) that has become very crucial to their lives and living. Various researches have shown that increasing amount of time is spent on social media and growing number of people continue to weave their lives around social media and its use. With increasing dependence on technological devices, their responsible use continues to remain an important issue.

In general, Islam encourages its adherents to seek and utilize knowledge in furtherance of the purpose of man's creation: to worship Allah. The verses below from the Holy Quran establish the position of Islam with respect to knowledge (and by extension technology and social media).

- 39:10 notes that a person with knowledge is better than one without knowledge
- 96:4 – 6 urges acquisition of knowledge
- 58:12 indicates that Allah will raise the status of those who possess knowledge

There are also several verses in the Holy Quran that affirm that man can rule the forces of nature with knowledge and therefore enjoin the study of nature as well as conditions of different countries. Further, there are several ahadith that support the position of Islam in relation to knowledge which forms the basis of technology and social media. A very popular hadith reports the Holy Prophet (saw) as saying that even if knowledge is in China, Muslims must take steps to go there and acquire it!

The significance of knowledge (and therefore technology and social media) is therefore obvious. All groups of people (Muslims and non-Muslims) who claim that Islam has no place for innovation, technology and social media must therefore be completely ignored. As we know, some of these people turn around hypocritically to use the same things they claim are unislamic.

However, Islam does not give a "blank check" to the use of acquired knowledge, technology and social media.

In general, technology is defined as the application or utilization of scientific knowledge. Social media, on the other hand, involves interaction among people in which they create, share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Examples of these virtual communities and networks are whatsapp, facebook, and twitter. Social media is clearly enabled by technology so there is an obvious relation between the two. The following features of social media are noteworthy:

- Interaction among people
- Creation, sharing and exchanging of information and ideas
- Reliance on virtual communities and networks.

Islam enjoins adherents to seek knowledge and make use of acquired knowledge in order to further the purpose of man's creation, which is to worship Allah. This is the context within which the responsible use or otherwise of social media is defined. In other words the use of technology and social media can pass as responsible so long as it furthers the purpose of man's creation: the worship of Allah.

With this background, the following examples are presented to demonstrate responsible and irresponsible use of technology and social media:

- In the transportation industry, jets and rockets have been developed to enhance movement and further acquisition of knowledge. On the back of this technology, however, rockets and missiles have been made to kill and destroy!
- In agricultural industry, there are technologies that can enable the production of enough food for everyone on the planet yet millions of people go hungry and die regularly from hunger! In Ghana for example, tonnes of agricultural produce go to waste every year because we have failed to apply knowledge and make use of technology.
- In one of his sermons, our beloved Huzur (atba), mentioned that 200 people joined our jamat after a tabligh on a radio station in Benin. Yet on other radio stations in Ghana, profane and divisive politicking are all what we hear on them, resulting in increasing promiscuity and enmity among people.

In relation to social media in particular the examples below highlight some of the responsible as well as irresponsible use of it.

- Whiles there are platforms such as those operated by national, regional and circuit aamilas as well as various shoobas that enable sharing of religious knowledge and jamat information, there are those who take to social media to create and share false information to run down people and organizations or unnecessarily scare people. Social media has become an avenue where gossiping and other things that are unislamic are being undertaken.
- Whiles there are groups of Muslims who have gathered on social media and organizing various discussions to gain more understanding and knowledge (such as Muslims Dissect Issues), there are also those who take to social media to engage in despicable activities and exchanging of graphic materials (be they texts, images, audio or videos).

It is sad to note that some people have become so addicted to social media that they fail to either pray or pray on time. Others also come to mosque and even during Juma prayers, are found engaging in the use of social media in a manner that negatively affects their prayers as well as detract others close to them from concentrating on sermons. Many are also ignoring advice from Nizam of the jamat and sharing more information than required to use social media, putting themselves and their families at danger.

Meanwhile, through social media, the sermons and other directives of Nizam go far and wide, reaching hundreds of thousands of people regularly. Through social media the message of the Promised Messiah (as) is truly reaching all the corners of the globe in fulfilment of a revelation received by the Promised Messiah. Again, through technology and social media a prophecy that characterizes the coming of the Messiah and Mahdi, that upon his appearance “ears will become long”, has been fulfilled. We as Ahmadi Muslims, therefore, cannot ignore technology and social media in our activities. However, we have to put them to responsible use, which is solely for furthering the purpose of our creation.

REVIEWED

By SHOoba ISHA'AT - MKAGH at 5:47 pm, Nov 29, 2016