

**MUSLIM UNITY ON *DA'WAH* APPROACH: IMPACT OF HASSAN AL-BANNĀ ON
THE MUSLIM STUDENTS' SOCIETY OF NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Hassan Al-Banna, a great Islamic intellectual revolutionist of Egypt won global acknowledgement for eruditory contributions to Da'wah methodology and dynamism. His works have been among the most appealing and influential basis for the Muslim youths championing the course of Islamic Da'wah (proselytization) in Nigeria. The respect accorded his writings has majorly been accounted for on the grounds of his proven intellectual influence and unified strategy to bring the Muslim youths together on common platform. In view of this, the paper examines the influence of Hassan Al-Banna on the unity of Muslim youths towards the enhancement of strategic approaches to solve divergent socio-religious challenges confronting the youths in Nigeria. This is with particular reference to the coordinated Da'wah activities by the MSSN members regardless of their social strata and backgrounds. The findings revealed that unity of purpose by the MSSN using Hassan Al-Bannā's works as template in the Nigerian milieu assisted to combat some high level of immoralities and inter-face problems among the youths. The paper concludes that the roles of youths in nation building in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Finally, it is recommended that juvenile delinquencies can be drastically reduced when youths of proven intelligence and piety are brought together on the platform of unity. This caliber of youths should be allowed to participate in the modalities for national integration and control of crimes.

Key words: *Da'wah, Tawhīd, Al-Ma'thūrōt, Recitation, Alcohol.*

Introduction

The Muslim Brotherhood (*Al-Ikhwānu-l-Muslimūn*) is an Islamic Movement founded in Egypt by Hassan Al-Bannā in March 1928. The mission of the Movement was to realize a return of the Islamic Caliphacy which was abolished in Turkey in 1924 by Mustapha Kamal Atatürk. To realize this, all round organizational activities were to put in place for spiritual, intellectual, social and political training of its members in a way to meet up with contemporary challenges. It was this comprehensiveness in the focus and method of training of the Muslim Brotherhood that really made it much more attracted to MSSN than any other organization. This and the *Sunni* character made the MSSN had a flare for the Muslim Brotherhood over the Iranian ideology and methodology. With Hassan al-Bannā's writings, the various branches of the MSSN throughout Nigeria came under a united *Da'wah* methodology and brotherhood. The spiritual standard of the MSSN was uplifted as they were reminded that *ALLĀH* is the source of law which should guide their lives. As a result of this, numerous members constantly sought to understand the Glorious Qur'ān as the principal

source of guidance for them. This was so, because, Hassan al-Bannā through his writings adopted a number of methods through which the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* of the Prophet (SAW) would be understood.¹

One of such methods is the scientific and precise explanation of the Holy Qur'ān in such a way that it could demonstrate the applicability of its rules to the modern society. Secondly, the need for individual Muslims to apply Qur'anic code of conduct to their family lives before it could be explained to cover the society was emphasized in al-Bannā's writings. The need to emulate the Prophet (SAW) as the role model of the Muslim Community was emphasized because the Prophet represents a perfect interpretation of the Glorious Qur'ān.²

The significant characteristics of the Muslim Brotherhood are manifested through the Islamic comprehensive way of life and the wide range of activities and training in which it evolved. To this effect, the leaders of MSSN started guiding their members through the inspiration got from Hassan al-Bannā's writings and the Muslim Brotherhood, in the light of the strategy and methods adopted by the Muslim Brotherhood to inculcate the pristine *Islām*.

Religious Ideologies of Hassan Al-Bannā and its Relevance to the Unity of Muslim Youths on *Da'wah*.

Hassan al-Bannā's writings have not come with any new ideas or beliefs with a view to moulding modern Muslim personalities alien to the first generation of the Muslims. But rather his religious ideologies are beliefs which are replica of the original and sound Islamic ideology as he has reiterated it in one of his books while discussing the characteristics of an ideal Islamic personality that must be of sound and original ideology. He said:-

*The first duty of the Muslim Brotherhood is to demonstrate to people the perspective of Islām in a clear and evident way, no additions, no deduction and no confusion. This is the theoretical part of our thought. As for the practical, it is to demand them to fulfill these perspectives, urge them to implement them and put them into action.*³

In order to clarify it more, Al-Bannā adds:

The programme of the Muslim Brotherhood has clear and definite stages. We know exactly what we want and how to fulfill it: We want to mould the Muslim man in his thought and ideology, in his morals and

*affection, in his deeds and actions. This is our moulding of the individual.*⁴

To buttress the spiritual influence of Hassan al-Bannā's writings on MSSN the following instances may suffice. In the past and present, the booklet; *AL-MATHŪRŪT* has constituted the first and foremost book of daily supplication (morning and evening) for an average member of MSSN. No book after the Glorious Qur'ān has really gained wider spread and use in MSSN than *AL-MATHŪRŪT*. It has been in circulation among MSSN members as far back as 1980's. It contains verses of the Holy Qur'ān and *Ahadith* of the Prophet (SAW) in form of supplication on different occasions. Remarking on this, 'Abdul Hakim Bakr said:

*The position of the use of Al-Mathūrōt in our midst and at our programs has been like that of gun in the hand of a soldier. Infact, it has become a tradition among us that at the commencement of our program and before any other thing else the congregational recitation of it takes place.*⁵

It will be quite interesting to note here that the much talked about *Al-Mathūrōt* was compiled by Imam Hassan al-Bannā.

Another instance is the view of Hassan al-Bannā on the issue of *Tawhīd* (unity of God) – which is often appreciated not only by MSSN but also by learned scholars of *Islām*. This is as regards the debated views on whether the alleged “human attributes” with which ALLĀH (SWT) described Himself should be taken as they were or be rationally interpreted. This includes the Almighty ALLĀH (SWT) describing Himself as having hand, capable of getting angry; descending unto the last heaven in the third part of the night etc. Al-Bannā laid the controversy to rest on this issue when addressing the *Ikhwān*.

*The opinion of the Salaf (the orthodox Islamic scholars) is Aslam (safer) while that of the Khalaf (later Islamic scholars) is Ahkam (sound more rational). However I prefer to share that of the Salaf.*⁶

Appreciating this submission of Al-Bannā as it is, Mas'ūd Ballo remarked:

Long before we came across the submission of Shaykh Hassan al-Bannā many of us had been at logger head with each other in view of the different stands maintained by the scholars of Islām on the understanding of ALLĀH'S attributes which have human

*interpretations. But the Imam's opinion has solved the problem to a greater extent.*⁷

In a nutshell, many MSSN members are seen taking after the method of *Ikhwān* today in their Spiritual training as in the reading of the Glorious Qur'ān and *Al-Mathūrōt* on daily basis (morning and evening), observance of *Tahajjud* regularly, and organizing spiritually-oriented programs. *LETTER TO A MUSLIM STUDENT* is the English translation of a letter that Hassan al-Bannā wrote to one of his disciples who was studying in the West. The sincere advice contained in this letter reminds the addressee and indeed all the Muslim students that the first and foremost goal in life is to please ALLĀH (SWT) and live in accordance with His sacred law. Also it brings home that studying ought not to be an end in itself or for seeking material gain; a Muslim ought to excel in his or her study in order to work for *Islām* and benefit humanity. Below are excerpts from the book titled "Letter to a Muslim student" written by Hassan al-Bannā.

1. O my brother, excel in your observance of ALLĀH (SWT) in all your dealings. Understand that He (SWT) keeps watch over you, sees you and encompasses all that is of concern to you wherever you are...⁸
2. Perform the obligatory duties which ALLĀH has enjoined upon you as a Muslim student at their appointed times. Do not neglect them by relying on performing them at a later time, because you are busy with work or resorting to other excuses for justification...⁹
3. Be steadfast in prayer and perfect your fast. If you are in a state of complete inability to fast, then according to the saying of ALLĀH (SWT) you have a remission. Spread whatever time you can in performing supererogatory works as duties of obedience. Perform the *Sunnah* prayers...¹⁰
4. Increase your recitation of the Glorious Qur'ān with understanding and deliberation. It is a healing for the soul and a comfort to the heart. Designate from it a portion to read at the beginning of the day and a portion to read at the end of it, hence the best beginning and the best end...¹¹
5. In the delights of life and pleasures of the world, you will see that which inclines the heart, impresses the mind, attracts the eyes and bewilders those whose spirits are weak. Do not let these seduce you away from virtue and cause you to forget the Hereafter...¹²
6. ...All pleasures brought by contemporary civilization will result in nothing other than pain. A pain that will overwhelm their enticement and remove their sweetness...¹³

7. Dearest brother, what *ALLĀH* has made a *Harām* (unlawful) for us, those people consider it as *Halāl* (lawful) for them. When they commit a *Harām* (unlawful) act, they will neither feel ashamed nor will they refrain from perpetrating it. You should neither agree with their whims nor mix with them in their sins...¹⁴
8. Do not take their girls for company, and do not let there develop between you and them, any special friendship or any emotional relationship...¹⁵
9. As for alcohol, do not approach it. And do not use the climate as an excuse, because when *ALLĀH* made it *Harām* (unlawful), He had full knowledge about all types of climate but did not exclude one country from another or one nation from another from this prohibition. *ALLĀH* (SWT) made it forbidden with neither doubt nor exception...¹⁶
10. Do not taste anything in those restaurants which serve *Harām* (unlawful) food, like pork and dead meat. In that which is *Halāl* (lawful) you have a substitute and enough for contentment...¹⁷
11. As for casinos, night clubs, and other such places of vanity, your time is far too precious to be wasted in them...¹⁸
12. Be critical, with insight, and be just and well acquainted with people. Do not let your goodness draw you to forget their bad, and their bad hurt you to forget their goodness. Rather, study them as would a researcher and an examiner...¹⁹
13. You will find there a group of people dishonoring your Prophet (SAW), faulting your Qur’ān and disgracing your people. Do not sit with those people, until they turn to different theme...²⁰
14. Dearest brother, be aware that calling the people through practical examples is far better than calling them through speech...²¹
15. Whenever an opportunity arises for you to deliver a speech or a lecture at one of their meeting places or societies, prepare yourself for it...²²

Finally, he said: “There is still so much for me to say and I would have loved to continue this advice with you, yet my concern is that if I prolong this discourse any more, you may forget most of what I said; for over speaking does distract one from what is being said.”²³

The Intellectual Impact

The intellectual impacts of Hassan al-Bannā’s writings on the Muslim Students’ Society of Nigeria (MSSN) appears to be the most permeating and indelible influence left on

the image of the Society. The influence could be felt on a wide spectrum of ideas in *Islām*: however, these could be summarized in respect of these two concepts.

(i) Understanding of *Islām*, (ii) Understanding of the concept of Islamic *Da'wah* (call) and its methodology.

Means and Methodology of Hassan al-Bannā's *Da'wah*

Comprehensiveness, gradualism and dynamism have always remained constant in the application of means and method applied by Hassan al-Bannā and his followers in the realization of their goals and objectives of the Islamic Movement. The need for comprehensiveness in the means and method is rightly accounted for due to the comprehensiveness of goals and syllabus. This should be so for a comprehensive operation which needs a comprehensive approach. This is a point clearly stated by Hassan al-Bannā when he said:

*As regards the means of our work in the general view it is generally the reawaking and spreading of Islamic Da'wah (call) with all available means of communication until it is understood by the masses and defended by them.*²⁴

In the message of the 5th *Mu'tamar* (conference) of the *Ikhwān* conducted by Hassan al-Bannā himself, he pointed out and explained in details the need for comprehensiveness in the style adopted by the *Ikhwān* in the training of individual brothers. According to him there are three main phases (or stages) that are to be passed through before the final establishment of *Islām* as a state: (i) the Education stage (*Marhalatut-Ta'lem*), (ii) the Formation stage (*Marhalatut-Takwen*), (iii) the Execution stage (*Marhalatut-Tanfeth*).²⁵

Dynamism and gradualism in the means and method of Hassan al-Bannā's *Da'wah* (call) too can never be overemphasized. It is itself a constant factor in all the phases and places of the *Ikhwān* operation even right from the first day of the Imam's *Da'wah* (call). For instance it is on record that the first productive *Da'wah* of Hassan al-Bannā started from the Tea Coffee-house since he tried Mosque but was disappointed.²⁶ Hassan al-Bannā never stuck rightly to the Mosque but set out for other avenues to call people to his mission. Nothing could have informed him of this instinct but a sense of dynamism and gradualism.

Manifestations of the Impacts on the *Da'wah* Methodology and Unity of the MSSN

For the purpose of the influence of the impacts of the teachings of Hassan al-Bannā, the Lagos Area Unit of the B-Zone will be of special focus. This is not to imply that the impacts were not felt in other Area Units (State Chapters) of the MSSN but only for the

purpose of specification. These impacts came to bare in view of the themes of programmes and topics of lectures of various activities of the Lagos Area Unit. Also in view of some civil actions (socio-political activities) which are carried out by the Unit.²⁷ Going by the analysis of Hassan al-Bannā as regards the stages of Islamic work, MSSN has appreciated this practically by putting in place some educative programmes and enlightenment activities such as *Usrah* (weekly family-like gathering), *Da'wah* weekends (at various branches), public lectures, annual HTP (Holiday Training Programmes), December IVC (Islamic Vacation Course), *Ummuāt* (all married sisters) programme etc.²⁸ All these are done in recognition and fulfillment of the first stage of *Da'wah*, i.e. Education stage *Marhalatut-Ta'lim*. This informs also of the use of themes such as: “Let the Qur’ān Intervene”, “Re Echoing Our Mission”, “Evolving New Strategies For the 21st Century Challenges”, “Islām and the World”, “The Prophetic Mission”, “Towards Understanding Islām”, “Islām and Terrorism”²⁹ etc. The above themes and other related topics underneath are targeted at educating and orientating MSSN members towards having the correct understanding of Islām.

In the midst of this as well, some socio-religious activities are being carried out by the MSSN in the present democratic dispensation in Nigeria in the reflections of Hassan al-Bannā’s intellectual dynamism. Instance of this are the various peaceful demonstrations and rallies organized by the Lagos Area Unit of the MSSN at different occasions in relations to the issues such as the return of schools/prayer congress to the Christian missionary advocated by the Lagos State Governor; Senator Bola Ahmad Tinubu, in a meeting held in his office on the 13th of July, 1999, with Muslim leaders as well as their Chief Imams.³⁰ On the side of the MSSN, they approached the issue intellectually by inviting various Muslim societies/institutions to be part to a convention/prayer congress against the return of schools to the missionaries on the 8th of August, 1999 at University of Lagos Central Mosque. At the venue, Muslim Youths Convention on the Return of Schools (MYCORS) was formed to champion the course in which MSSN directed the affairs.³¹ On the 20th January, 2000, (MYCORS) organized a press conference with the attendance of other Muslim organizations such as: National Council of Muslim Youth Organizations (NACOMYO), Federation of Muslim Women’s Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), *Ansārud-deen* Society of Nigeria, *Jamā’at-ul-Islamiyyah* of Nigeria, *Anwār-ul-Islām* Movement of Nigeria, *Ahmadiyya* Movement in *Islām*, *Nawar-ud-Den* Society of Nigeria, Council of Chief *Imams* and *‘Ulamāu*, Representatives of Muslim Schools Proprietors, Representatives of News Agency of Nigeria, etc.³²

The representatives of Muslim organizations met the committee set-up by the State Government to implement the return of schools to the missionaries. In their meeting they demanded to see the Governor which he later consented to meet with the MSSN executive officers. The meeting came up on the 17th September, 2000 at the Governor's office, Alausa, Lagos State.³³ At the meeting, the MSSN observed the trends in the return of schools to the Missionaries with concern as neo-colonialism and an attempt to de-emphasize Islamic education. The Muslim students have suffered enough of religious discrimination and harassment in schools even now that they are under the control of Government. Some of the cardinal issues discussed were:

1. Muslim students are being forced to pray in Christian way in a government controlled school.
2. Christian teachers are teaching Islamic knowledge.
3. Muslim students in some secondary schools are parked in one class and their Christian colleagues in other classes. King's College was a good example.³⁴

The meeting ended successfully in favour of the MSSN because MSSN was able to rub mind with the Governor on issues that were of more importance to the society. They were able to express their observations, and offer advice such as the followings. That the Governor should:

- (a) Employ more religious studies teachers into schools.
- (b) Provide employment opportunities for youths.
- (c) Provide social amenities and improve the standard of living.
- (d) Provide bursary allowance for secondary school students to assist their parents and
- (e) Reduce the money being spent on sports and increase that of education. Stadia are not our immediate needs.³⁵

The successful outcome of this meeting wouldn't have been possible if the issue was handled with violence. All these were dynamic means through which the message of Islām is spread to the world: either for the purpose of education, correction or reformation. It is to be reminded that this is the kind of *Da'wah* (call) methodology preached by Hassan al-Bannā and imbibed by the MSSN.

However, the MSSN has not done much towards overhauling of the Nigerian youths through an Islamic designed citizenship education. The present socio-political predicaments of Nigeria in terms of corruption, mistrust, maladministration, political thugery, ritual killings, kidnapping and assassinations of political opponents are critical challenges facing the Nigerian Muslim youths. The impact of the MSSN in training their members to salvage

the country from bad leadership through their direct participation is indeed daunting. Seemingly, the country is breeding hoodlums in succession to rule the country.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the overwhelming influence of Hassan al-Bannā's writings on the spiritual and intellectual developments of Muslim youths championing the course of Islamic *da'wah* (call) cannot be overemphasized. The impacts of his revolutionary activities have been felt in the various sectors of Muslim endeavours. This respect accorded his writings has majorly been on the ground of the comprehensiveness and dynamism of his message. The Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria through pragmatic application of the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamic revolutionary principles has effected positive changes in the socio-economic realm and ideal spiritual training and ascension in Nigeria.

Recommendations

In consideration of all that had been written above in terms of prospects and problems the following suggestions are humbly submitted:

1. That MSSN authority should devote conscious effort towards the writing of its own history which should be reviewed and supplemented from time to time.
2. That it is high time the leaders as well as the followers of the society (especially in the B-Zone) resolve their internal crises and turn over a new leaf as a way of forging ahead in championing the course of the real Islamic work.
3. That MSSN should make itself felt in the overall life of Nigerian society such that its spiritual, intellectual and moral values would be positively imparted in the life of an average Nigeria.
4. That the society should make itself felt in the body polity of the country in influencing the government policies to be people oriented and welfare packaged.
5. That the society should try as much as possible to make itself internationally relevant in the Muslim World like other organizations in the Muslim world. This calibre of youths should be allowed to participate in the modalities for national integration and control of crimes.

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