

Qhutbah, Insha Allah, Friday, May 23, 2003

Alhamdu lillah, wa ash hadu ala ila ha ill lallah

Bismillah hir Rahman nir Rahim

Can any of us, if we are true believers in God alone, honestly claim that we are the absolute owners of any portion of our wealth? Are our rights over it limited in any way? Most of us know what capitalism, socialism and communism are. But do we know what the situation is from the Quranic viewpoint?

Whatever right we may have over anything is delegated to us by God. Early in the Quran, God says [2:2] This scripture is infallible; a beacon for the righteous; [2:3] who believe in the unseen, observe the Contact Prayers (Salat), and from our provisions to them, they give to charity. We are meant to invest our labour to be fruitful and productive in the manner designed by God. We can sow seeds in the soil but to bring out a seedling and make it grow into a tree is the work of Someone other than us.

[56:63] Have you noted the crops you reap? [56:64] Did you grow them, or did we? [56:65] If we will, we can turn it into hay. [36:71] Have they not seen that we created for them, with our own hands, livestock that they own? [36:72] And we subdued them for them; some they ride, and some they eat. [36:73] They derive other benefits from them, as well as drinks. Would they not be appreciative?

These are among several verses that prove the fundamental point that our "wealth" is in principle the "property" of God alone. It is He who has bestowed upon us the right to utilize it. So in return, He has the right to demand that we should use the management of this wealth to the commandments of the Quran. We have the right over things we own but this right is not absolute or unlimited. It carries along with it certain precincts and restrictions that have been imposed by the *Real Owner* of this wealth.

There is no doubt whatsoever that according to the Quran all wealth belongs to God alone. [3:129] To GOD belongs everything in the heavens and the earth. He forgives whomever He wills, and punishes whomever He wills. GOD is Forgiver, Most Merciful. [18:42] Indeed, his crops were wiped out, and he ended up sorrowful, lamenting what he had spent on it in vain, as his property lay barren. He finally said, "I wish I never set up my property as a god beside my Lord."

Keeping this principle in mind we understand that while unconditional ownership is in the *Hands of God*, we are only the trustees of whatever we possess. We also have to subordinate our individual freedom to our social responsibilities, which are

expressed in the Quran. The right to own property is recognized but it has to be seen in the perspective of society's needs. [57:7] Believe in GOD and His messenger, and give from what He has bestowed upon you. Those among you who believe and give (to charity) have deserved a great recompense.

By nature, as a general rule, we are greedy and selfish. If left to ourselves, we would not do much for others in society. The Quran tells us [17:100] Proclaim, "If you possessed my Lord's treasures of mercy, you would have withheld them, fearing that you might exhaust them. The human being is stingy." [9:75] Some of them even pledged: "If GOD showered us with His grace, we would be charitable, and would lead a righteous life."

However, God sees to it that everybody should be provided with a minimum of sustenance. [11:6] There is not a creature on earth whose provision is not guaranteed by GOD. And He knows its course and its final destiny. All are recorded in a profound record. [4:5] Do not give immature orphans the properties that GOD has entrusted with you as guardians. You shall provide for them therefrom, and clothe them, and treat them kindly.

Wherever you see hunger and abject poverty remember that it is entirely on account of the misdoings of humans. The Quran clearly states in [7:96] Had the people of those communities believed and turned righteous, we would have showered them with blessings from the heaven and the earth. Since they decided to disbelieve, we punished them for what they earned. So now we understand the necessity to take steps to rectify social imbalances brought on about by us. [24:22] Those among you who are blessed with resources and wealth shall be charitable towards their relatives, the poor, and those who have immigrated for the sake of GOD. They shall treat them with kindness and tolerance; do you not love to attain GOD's forgiveness? GOD is Forgiver, Most Merciful.

The Quran devises means of checking individual greed and lays out a framework wherein all members of society get a minimum of provisions in accordance with its injunctions. Although our behaviour should be philanthropic, our acts of giving should be guided solely by the desire to earn the pleasure of God. [76:9] "We feed you for the sake of GOD; we expect no reward from you, nor thanks." [2:272] You are not responsible for guiding anyone. GOD is the only one who guides whoever chooses (to be guided). Any charity you give is for your own good. Any charity you give shall be for the sake of GOD. Any charity you give will be repaid to you, without the least injustice.

There should be no egoistic behaviour and self-glorification but a firm commitment to ameliorate (improve/ upgrade) the least privileged in society. [16:90] GOD advocates justice, charity, and regarding the relatives. And He forbids evil, vice, and transgression. He enlightens you, that you may take heed.

The act of giving is reflective of the intention of God and that is why the owner of rights to any property should realize his socio-economic responsibility. Only when we start to restore the rights of the deprived and the oppressed bearing in mind the moral principles of the Quran will the distance between the rich and the poor be reduced. If we strictly adhere to the system of Zakat on ourselves this distance can be corrected. [6:141] He is the One who established gardens, trellised and untrellised, and palm trees, and crops with different tastes, and olives, and pomegranate - fruits that are similar, yet dissimilar. Eat from their fruits, and give the due alms on the day of harvest, and do not waste anything. He does not love the wasters. [18:39] "When you entered your garden, you should have said, 'This is what GOD has given me (Maa Shaa Allah). No one possesses power except GOD (La Quwwata Ellaa Bellaah).' You may see that I possess less money and less children than you.

Any economic order not based on Quranic principles will not succeed in the long run. [51:19] A portion of their money was set aside for the beggar and the needy. What the poor get from the rich is not just charity but also their haqq (right). It could be that someone or a particular social system may have deprived them earlier. [28:3] We recite to you herein some history of Moses and Pharaoh, truthfully, for the benefit of people who believe. [28:4] Pharaoh turned into a tyrant on earth, and discriminated against some people. He persecuted a helpless group of them, slaughtering their sons, while sparing their daughters. He was indeed wicked. [28:5] We willed to compensate those who were oppressed on earth, and to turn them into leaders, and make them the inheritors. [28:6] And to establish them on earth, and to give Pharaoh, Hamaan, and their troops a taste of their own medicine.

[10:88] Moses said, "Our Lord, you have given Pharaoh and his elders luxuries and wealth in this world. Our Lord, they only use them to repulse others from Your path. Our Lord, wipe out their wealth, and harden their hearts to prevent them from believing, until they see the painful retribution." [28:76] Qaaroon (the slave driver) was one of Moses' people who betrayed them and oppressed them. We gave him so many treasures that the keys thereof were almost too heavy for the strongest band. His people said to him, "Do not be so arrogant; GOD does not love those who are arrogant. [28:77] "Use the provisions bestowed upon you by GOD to seek the abode of the Hereafter, without neglecting your share in this world. Be charitable, as GOD has been charitable towards you. Do not keep on corrupting the earth. GOD does not love the corruptors." [38:34] We thus put Solomon to the test; we blessed him with vast material wealth, but he steadfastly submitted.

The rich should part with their excess wealth as they were not its owners in the first place but only custodians and its disposal is subject to God's laws. [2:219] They also ask you what to give to charity: say, "The excess." GOD thus clarifies the revelations for you, that you may reflect. [36:47] When they are told, "Give from GOD's provisions to you," those who disbelieve say to those who believe, "Why

should we give to those whom GOD could feed, if He so willed? You are really far astray." [57:10] Why do you not spend in the cause of GOD, when GOD possesses all wealth in the heavens and the earth? Distinguished from the rest are those among you who spend before the victory and strive. They attain a greater rank than those who spend after the victory and strive. For each, GOD promises salvation. GOD is Cognizant of everything you do. [3:180] Let not those who withhold and hoard GOD's provisions think that this is good for them; it is bad for them. For they will carry their hoardings around their necks on the Day of Resurrection. GOD is the ultimate inheritor of the heavens and the earth. GOD is fully Cognizant of everything you do.

[24:33] Those who cannot afford to get married shall maintain morality until GOD provides for them from His grace. Those among your servants who wish to be freed in order to marry, you shall grant them their wish, once you realize that they are honest. And give them from *GOD's money* that He has bestowed upon you....

[4:39] Why do they not believe in GOD and the Last Day, and give from GOD's provisions to them? GOD is fully aware of them. [6:142] Some livestock supply you with transportation, as well as bedding materials. Eat from GOD's provisions to you, and do not follow the steps of Satan; he is your most ardent enemy. [16:114] Therefore, you shall eat from GOD's provisions everything that is lawful and good, and be appreciative of GOD's blessings, if you do worship Him alone.

The Quran warns in [73:11] And let Me deal with the rejectors, who have been generously blessed; just give them a little time. [2:254] O you who believe, you shall give to charity from the provisions we have given to you, before a day comes where there is no trade, no nepotism, and no intercession. The disbelievers are the unjust. [7:50] The dwellers of Hell will call on the dwellers of Paradise: "Let some of your water, or some of GOD's provisions to you flow towards us." They will say, "GOD has forbidden them for the disbelievers."