

Qhutbah, Insha Allah, Friday, March 17, 2006

Alhamdu lillah, wa ash hadu ala ila ha ill lallah

Bismillah hir Rahman nir Rahim

Insha Allah, this Qhutbah is on the many faces of corruption (*zulm*). *Plato* in *The Republic* written circa 390 B.C.E. wondered how a person could be courageous and gentlemanly simultaneously. Early philosophers considered these two behaviors to be mutually exclusive and incompatible with each other. They wanted ideal citizens and a utopian state. In those days, by courage was meant boldness flanking the shocking and gentlemanliness stood for tender-heartedness. People generally agreed that these were two irreconcilables and that they could never be synchronized in one and the same person. Well, the Quran shows us that we can be kind and compassionate yet stand up for our rights and fight for justice and that we could achieve, Insha Allah, a utopian life here and now.

When we look around us and especially at the so called “Muslim” world, we see retaliations, seemingly motiveless and stray killings, bombings, hijackings, kidnappings, intentional mass murder, attacks on worshippers in mosques, incidents of blood, gore and brutality often sponsored, connived or condoned by “gentlemen” of “high social standing and breeding”.

The Quran terms such violence and bloodshed as “*zulm*” – tyranny and transgression which stem from unhampered power exercised by a person or an authority which is bereft of compassion, benevolence and forgiveness. But who can be more powerful than the Almighty? Because He is Omnipotent, He is Omnipresent and because He is Omnipresent, He is Omniscient. We can confirm from the Quran that whenever His supreme power and ability is named, His attributes of kindness, wisdom, forgiveness and mercy have also been mentioned. [22:41] They are those who, if we appointed them as rulers on earth, they would establish the Contact Prayers (Salat) and the obligatory charity (Zakat), and would advocate righteousness and forbid evil. GOD is the ultimate ruler.

For example, Sura Al-Hadeed – Iron [57:1] Glorifying GOD is everything in the heavens and the earth. He is the Almighty, Most Wise. [57:9] He is the One who sends down to His servant clear revelations, in order to lead you out of the darkness into the light. GOD is Compassionate towards you, Most Merciful. [4:149] If you work righteousness - either declared or concealed - or pardon a transgression, GOD is Pardoner, Omnipotent. One can find endlessly, Masha Allah, verses from the Glorious Quran to show that God exercises His sovereign authority with severity tempered with sympathy and disposition to forgive.

The word *zulm* is very broad in its significance. It is of three kinds – a) between humans and God, the greatest of which is *shirk* which is idol worship and polytheism & *kufr* or disbelief and this would include all wrong beliefs with regard to the Creator; b) between humans and humans which would include all kinds of transgressions including a violation of the rights of others and c) between humans and our own selves which would include all kinds of guilty actions detrimental not to others but to our own self by transgressing the limits imposed by God (*huduudallahi*) [65:1]These are GOD's laws. Anyone who transgresses GOD's laws commits an injustice against himself.

Adam and his spouse were the first human couple to be cautioned [2:35] We said, "O Adam, live with your wife in Paradise, and eat therefrom generously, as you please, but do not approach this tree, lest you sin." [21:87] And Zan-Noon (Jonah, "the one with an 'N' in his name"), abandoned his mission in protest, thinking that we could not control him. He ended up imploring from the darkness (of the big fish's belly): "There is no god other than You. Be You glorified. I have committed a gross sin." This is what Jonah cried out when realization dawned on him that his personal calamity of such a rare kind was the result of divine wrath invited by his own error of judgment as a human being despite his elevated position as a prophet. We find the word *zulm* and its derivatives here as also in 28:16 (Moses); 6:63; 7:9; 7:103; 11: 117 and 17:59.

Despotism of the most reprehensible nature, according to the Quran, is that which is associated with the conduct of tyrants and ruthless oppressors like Pharaoh, Hamaan and Qaaron. Pharaoh's elders and courtiers were annoyed at the proselytizing crusade of Moses and Aaron. They complained [7:127] The leaders among Pharaoh's people said, "Will you allow Moses and his people to corrupt the earth, and forsake you and your gods?" He said, "We will kill their sons, and spare their daughters. We are much more powerful than they are."

Pharaoh had a genocidal campaign to eradicate the very roots of the Children of Israel who had found a foothold in Egypt since the days of Jacob and Joseph. It began long before Aaron and Moses were born and it intensified after their messengership during the reign of Rameses II. This carried on until God intervened at His chosen time and rescued them from the mass slaughter carried out by the state authority of that day. God reminds the children of Israel [2:49] Recall that we saved you from Pharaoh's people who inflicted upon you the worst persecution, slaying your sons and sparing your daughters. That was an exacting test from your Lord. [2:50] Recall that we parted the sea for you; we saved you and drowned Pharaoh's people before your eyes.

This state sponsored cruelty was so sickening and shocking that even Pharaoh's noble natured wife was disgusted and prayed to God [66:11] And GOD cites as an

example of those who believed the wife of Pharaoh. She said, "My Lord, build a home for me at You in Paradise, and save me from Pharaoh and his works; save me from the transgressing people."

Next to state supported and state implemented totalitarianism and suppression is extra judicial killings, which in common parlance is called "police encounters". The Quran warns [6:151] You shall not kill - GOD has made life sacred - except in the course of justice. These are His commandments to you, that you may understand." However, one might argue that this is the course of justice, the person would walk free due to political connections, frighten off witnesses and is below 40 in any case etc.

The first unjust and unlawful killing of a person in human history has been recounted in the Quran - *The First Murder* [5:27] Recite for them the true history of Adam's two sons. They made an offering, and it was accepted from one of them, but not from the other. He said, "I will surely kill you." He said, "GOD accepts only from the righteous. [5:28] "If you extend your hand to kill me, I am not extending my hand to kill you. For I reverence GOD, Lord of the universe. [5:29] "I want you, not me, to bear my sin and your sin, then you end up with the dwellers of Hell. Such is the requital for the transgressors." [5:30] His ego provoked him into killing his brother. He killed him, and ended up with the losers.

To emphasise that killing, except in the course of justice, is extremely loathsome, the Quran mentions that God had prescribed stern and exemplary punishments to the Children of Israel. According to the Quran, [17:33] You shall not kill any person - for GOD has made life sacred - except in the course of justice. If one is killed unjustly, then we give his heir authority to enforce justice. Thus, he shall not exceed the limits in avenging the murder; he will be helped.

Discouraging Capital Punishment [2:178] O you who believe, equivalence is the law decreed for you when dealing with murder - the free for the free, the slave for the slave, the female for the female. If one is pardoned by the victim's kin, an appreciative response is in order, and an equitable compensation shall be paid. This is an alleviation from your Lord and mercy. Anyone who transgresses beyond this incurs a painful retribution.

Thus, although homicide is an offence of which cognizance is taken by the government or the state, the option to the heirs of the victim to claim compensation is there. This aspect of Quranic penal law is generally overlooked which, in spite of providing capital punishment for murder, leaves the door open for remission if the heir or heirs of the murdered person so desire.

Abortion is Murder [17:31] You shall not kill your children due to fear of poverty. We provide for them, as well as for you. Killing them is a gross offense. Here the subtitle emphasises that murder will include even the termination of a child in the womb.

Over reacting to a repressive act and making vengeance our sole purpose has been thoroughly discouraged in the Quran. [42:40] Although the just requital for an injustice is an equivalent retribution, those who pardon and maintain righteousness are rewarded by GOD. He does not love the unjust. Furthermore, some kind of reward has been promised to those who forgive and make peace [16:126] And if you punish, you shall inflict an equivalent punishment. But if you resort to patience (instead of revenge), it would be better for the patient ones.

There are many people who have not read and studied the Quran. They have neither a focused outlook nor an open mind. Such people consider that the Quran prescribes only ideal punishments, which may have been acceptable in the mediaeval times but are out of sync in these modern times. They should refer to the two above-mentioned ayats, which prohibit penalties and punishments that are disproportionate to the offence and recommend pardon and patience. [2:153] O you who believe, seek help through steadfastness and the Contact Prayers (Salat). GOD is with those who steadfastly persevere.

It is unfortunate that there are those who swear by the Quran and then kill unjustly without the due process of law, or over react to an alleged offence to settle the score and inflict punishments, which are excessive and disproportionate to the charge. Similarly, it is a reflection on those who profess to believe in the sacrosanct edicts of the Quran and yet violate them by misinterpreting them and hiding behind “theological” discourses, *Hadis* and *Sunna* that are based on speculation and hearsay. [10:36] Most of them follow nothing but conjecture, and conjecture is no substitute for the truth. GOD is fully aware of everything they do.

To know how high the Quran holds the sanctity of human life can be gauged *Grossness of Murder* [5:32] Because of this, we decreed for the Children of Israel that anyone who murders any person who had not committed murder or horrendous crimes (*fasaad*), it shall be as if he murdered all the people. And anyone who spares a life, it shall be as if he spared the lives of all the people. Our messengers went to them with clear proofs and revelations, but most of them, after all this, are still transgressing.

Some Quran translations translate *horrendous crimes* as *corruption on earth* [26:181] "You shall give full measure when you trade; do not cheat. [26:182] "You shall weigh with an equitable scale. [26:183] "Do not cheat the people out of their rights, and do not roam the earth corruptingly. If one uses unlawful translations then it would be permissible for the state to legally kill people likewise for not weighing

with a correct scale, deceiving customers in business transactions, indulging in evil and making mischief. [11:85] "O my people, you shall give full measure and full weight, equitably. Do not cheat the people out of their rights, and do not roam the earth corruptingly. A derivative of the word "*fasaad*" is used here.

Fasaad also has another derivative and connotes in [7:56] Do not corrupt the earth after it has been set straight, and worship Him out of reverence, and out of hope. Surely, GOD's mercy is attainable by the righteous. What is important is to realise that all kinds of corrupt and unfair practices attract strong punishment and is condemned by the Quran.

A point to be noted is that the Jewish civil and canonical law which is codified in the Talmud (the Mishnah and Gemarrah) applies only to the taking and saving the life of an Israelite instead of any human beings. This is just one more proof that the Quran addresses not a particular religious, national or ethnic group but the whole of humankind. [81:27] This is a message to (for) all the people. [68:52] It is in fact a message to the world.

As mentioned before, it is clearly wrong to presume from a rapid reading of the Quran that the Scripture prescribes punishments without mentioning leniency, pity, forgiveness, and mercy. While laying down the punishment for theft (which people think is harsh due to their lack of having an A.E.V.), [5:38] The thief, male or female, you shall mark their hands as a punishment for their crime, and to serve as an example from GOD. GOD is Almighty, Most Wise; the Quran tones it down by saying [5:39] If one repents after committing this crime, and reforms, GOD redeems him. GOD is Forgiver, Most Merciful.

[2:179] Equivalence is a life saving law for you, O you who possess intelligence, that you may be righteous.

[42:40] Although the just requital for an injustice is an equivalent retribution, those who pardon and maintain righteousness are rewarded by GOD. He does not love the unjust.

GOD BE GLORIFIED !