

Qhutbah, Insha Allah, Friday, Sept 23, 2005

Alhamdu lillah, wa ash hadu ala ila ha ill lalla

Bismillah hir Rahman nir Rahim

Insha Allah, this Qhutbah is on the Quran and human rights. For a number of reasons, some genuine and others not so genuine, human rights have become a vital universal issue. It was after the Industrial Revolution which began in 1848 that the rights of citizenship came to be shared by the majority of the population of every state. What is the meaning of the word citizen? It is commonly defined as one who owes allegiance to a government and who is entitled to protection by that government. Aristotle defined *a citizen as a person who had a share in the government of a state*. But in ancient Greece, citizens were an elite group. Thus his idea of citizenship was limited only to fraction of the whole population of the state and was essentially aristocratic and slaves were denied the rights of citizenship. There are of course different theories, rules and arrangements. Even today in the most modern states there are citizens who have limited rights. The Quran is the only scripture that defines with clarity the responsibility and duties of citizens.

The two world wars awakened the planet to some of the shocking injustices that are being inflicted upon humans even during periods of so called peace. The United Nations made a declaration called The Universal Charter of Human Rights in 1948. It represented a proclamation, an expression of awareness, an affirmation of desirable principles and a commitment to rectify the situation. Although all nations of the world have not yet ratified this declaration, nevertheless it symbolised an important landmark of humankind's march towards an age of political tolerance and respect for human rights.

There was another agreement in Helsinki, Finland which also played a very important role in influencing a number of countries in the world to become more receptive to human rights concerns especially those under the yoke of communism where human rights were a big joke. This is Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Rights of Man and of the Citizen 1776 – "...that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Today in all self declared civilized societies we see the predominance of the same signs although wrapped in sophistry and hypocrisy. There is injustice of the rich towards the poor, the repression of the weak by the strong, proliferation of falsehood and negligible consideration for human life, age and dignity except for the privileged segment.

The Quran was revealed at a time when the world was full of oppression. Slavery and serfdom were a way of life. Women were mere possessions. New born girls were buried alive. Killing at the smallest excuse was widespread. Respect and dignity, equality and fraternity and freedom for all humans were unknown principles. The Quran laid down universal rights for humanity as a whole that are to be observed and respected under all circumstances whether at peace or at war.

Rights are of different categories: moral as well as legal. All are enforceable by God and some by the State for the maintenance of public order and morality. Legal rights are also known as fundamental rights. Moral rights are also known as moral duties and / or social values. These include shunning all such actions which cause unjustified injury to others, their possessions and their way of life materially and spiritually. Rights would include the right to faith, intellect, wisdom, dignity, honour, work, fair wage, health, social security, leisure and property.

We must first realise that “rights” cannot have a healthy existence without its counterpart – “obligations”. In fact, the two represent two sides of the same coin. Rights of one become the obligation of others. Take for example zakat - [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.

[17:26] You shall give the due alms to the relatives, the needy, the poor, and the traveling alien, but do not be excessive, extravagant. [17:27] The extravagant are brethren of the devils, and the devil is unappreciative of his Lord. [17:28] Even if you have to turn away from them, as you pursue the mercy of your Lord, you shall treat them in the nicest manner. [17:29] You shall not keep your hand stingily tied to your neck, nor shall you foolishly open it up, lest you end up blamed and sorry.

Violation of rights due to God is called *sin*. Violation of rights due to the state is termed as *crime*. Violation of rights to other humans is *moral degradation*. The Quran asks all believers to observe all of them willingly and calls the term “piety” as “taqwa”. This is always stressed on as full accountability is the means to success not only in this world but also in the Hereafter.

We are all servants of God and have to be seekers of the truth. Even today rights given to us may be taken away at the whims of those in power whereas the rights granted to us by God cannot be superceded by any body, neither can they be revoked, invalidated, annulled, disputed, defied, disregarded, misrepresented, challenged or changed. [9:40] He made the word of the disbelievers lowly. GOD's word reigns supreme. GOD is Almighty, Most Wise. “*Tawheed*” implies One God, the Creator and Sustainer of the Universes and this guarantees us stability in all respects of life. Worship and obedience to God alone makes any idea of superiority of man, establishment and sovereignty meaningless.

A right to life is the first and basic right. This is enshrined in the Quran [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, it shall be as if he murdered all the people. Closely following is the right to safety of life. 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. [6:151] Say, "Come let me tell you what your Lord has really prohibited for you: You shall not set up idols

besides Him. You shall honor your parents. You shall not kill your children from fear of poverty - we provide for you and for them. You shall not commit gross sins, obvious or hidden. 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."

Blood cannot be spilled without justification. It is not permissible to oppress anyone – not just women and children. [2:191] You may kill those who wage war against you, and you may evict them whence they evicted you. Oppression is worse than murder. Do not fight them at the Sacred Masjid, unless they attack you therein. If they attack you, you may kill them. This is the just retribution for those disbelievers.

The Quran tells us that all humankind is equal without any distinction on the basis of race, colour, nationality or sex. [49:13] O people, we created you from the same male and female, and rendered you distinct peoples and tribes, that you may recognize one another. The best among you in the sight of GOD is the most righteous. GOD is Omniscient, Cognizant. No man is inferior or superior to the other except in terms of piety. Rights and responsibilities are shared by all be he Monarch or servant. The Head of State is merely the executive authority to put into practice the collective will of the people. Even the authority of the leader is no more than the extension of power of the individual delegated to the State.

The Quran clearly guarantees the sanctity of a person's home and honour and prohibits any authority from behaving in a manner that may not be tantamount to his fundamental rights. [24:27] O you who believe, do not enter homes other than yours without permission from their inhabitants, and without greeting them. This is better for you, that you may take heed. [24:28] If you find no one in them, do not enter them until you obtain permission. If you are told, "Go back," you must go back. This is purer for you. GOD is fully aware of everything you do.

There is to be no peeping or listening in other's homes. There is security of personal freedom, no incarceration of a citizen unless proven guilty in an open court and no arrest on the basis of suspicion. Individuals are accorded with the inviolability and protection of private life [49:12] O you who believe, you shall avoid any suspicion, for even a little bit of suspicion is sinful. You shall not spy on one another, nor shall you backbite one another; this is as abominable as eating the flesh of your dead brother. You certainly abhor this. You shall observe GOD. GOD is Redeemer, Most Merciful.

All have a right to protest, to be subjected to the due process of the law, and have the freedom of thought, expression and association. The right to justice is found in many places in the Quran [4:135] O you who believe, you shall be absolutely equitable, and observe GOD, when you serve as witnesses, even against yourselves, or your parents, or your relatives. Whether the accused is rich or poor, GOD takes care of both. Therefore, do not be biased by your personal wishes. If you deviate or disregard (this commandment), then GOD is fully Cognizant of everything you do. [4:148] GOD does not like the utterance of bad language, unless one is treated with gross injustice. GOD is Hearer, Knower. As long as one is not corrupting or spreading evil there is no right to abuse

citizens in the name of liberty. [58:9] O you who believe, if you have to confer secretly, you all shall not confer to commit sin, transgression, and to disobey the messenger. You shall confer to work righteousness and piety. You shall reverence GOD, before whom you will be summoned. [3:110] You are the best community ever raised among the people: you advocate righteousness and forbid evil, and you believe in GOD. If the followers of the scripture believed, it would be better for them. Some of them do believe, but the majority of them are wicked.

Freedom of conscience and conviction is guaranteed. It does not allow any pressure in religion. [2:256] There shall be no compulsion in religion: the right way is now distinct from the wrong way. Anyone who denounces the devil and believes in GOD has grasped the strongest bond; one that never breaks. GOD is Hearer, Omniscient. There is equality before the law. So even people of different religions living in a Submitter State would be accorded rights and protection of the State. They would have full freedom of values and belief within the limits set by law and decency.

There are several so called "Muslim" states that indulge in subjugating their citizens but one cannot blame the religion for this. If certain heads of state trample over the concept of freedom and equality as expressed in the Quran, they commit not only a blunder but a sin. There are also self appointed experts and pseudo guides masquerading as monopolists of knowledge – the ayatollahs, maulvis, mullas and maulanahs who rule the minds of the ignorant.

From Submission we learn that great emphasis has been laid on human rights, compassion, hospitality, dignity of the individual, respect for men and women with full justice and equity and this has been enjoined and enshrined in the Holy Quran. In an ideal believing community, a citizen would have the freedom to exercise his critical faculty to appeal for right and justice, as according to Quranic teachings he is duty bound to wipe away evils and wrong actions and make ceaseless efforts for justice and morality. [3:104] Let there be a community of you who invite to what is good, advocate righteousness, and forbid evil. These are the winners.

God allows the believers to satisfy their material requirements and physical requirements and desires reasonably and to enjoy the good things of life. [2:172] O you who believe, eat from the good things we provided for you, and be thankful to GOD, if you do worship Him alone. [20:81] Eat from the good things we provided for you, and do not transgress, lest you incur My wrath. Whoever incurs My wrath has fallen.

God does not want false prohibitions [7:32] Say, "Who prohibited the nice things GOD has created for His creatures, and the good provisions?" Say, "Such provisions are to be enjoyed in this life by those who believe. Moreover, the good provisions will be exclusively theirs on the Day of Resurrection." We thus explain the revelations for people who know.

God teaches us the value of moderation which then becomes our right [7:31] O children of Adam, you shall be clean and dress nicely when you go to the masjid. And eat and

drink moderately; Surely, He does not love the gluttons. [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. The Quran gives us a code of morals and manners and does not allow epicureanism and hedonism.

Parents have rights – [17:23] Your Lord has decreed that you shall not worship except Him, and your parents shall be honored. As long as one or both of them live, you shall never say to them, "Uff" (the slightest gesture of annoyance), nor shall you shout at them; you shall treat them amicably.

Orphans have rights [4:10] Those who consume the orphans' properties unjustly, eat fire into their bellies, and will suffer in Hell.

Look at the rights of your servants, your children. God has covered all the bases. [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. You shall not force your girls to commit prostitution, seeking the materials of this world, if they wish to be chaste. If anyone forces them, then GOD, seeing that they are forced, is Forgiver, Merciful.

The Quran stresses about knowledge and learning. No one should be left ignorant and illiterate. How else could one read, ponder and reflect? How could one think, be creative and lively ?

Even during a time of war an idol worshipper clashing with you has his right - [9:6] If one of the idol worshipers sought safe passage with you, you shall grant him safe passage, so that he can hear the word of GOD, then send him back to his place of security. That is because they are people who do not know.

The Quran permits complete freedom of faith, preaching, vocation and practice. It encompasses a multinational, multi-religious and classless global society with a special stress on social justice, tolerance and peaceful co-existence. It endorses dialogue for resolution of all kinds of religious, political, economic, social and ethnic disputes. It stands firmly by the weaker, distressed and disabled human. It teaches its followers to be kind and beneficent to all including creatures. Submission is truly a religion which can be rightly called the *universal humanitarian religion*.