

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2007

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ ، نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا  
وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا. مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ، وَمَنْ يُضِلِّ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ.  
وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ.

All Praise be to **الله**.

We praise him and ask him for help and forgiveness. We ask him for protection from the evilness in ourselves and from our own bad deeds. Whom-so-ever God guides to the truth no one will lead astray, and whom-so-ever He leads astray, no one will ever guide.

I testify that there is no God but **الله** to whom there is no partner  
and I testify that Muhammad **ﷺ** is his servant and messenger

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيداً ☆ يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ  
لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ، وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزاً عَظِيماً ﴾ (الأحزاب، 1-70)

*"O you who believe, fear Allah, and say what is the truth. That He may make your conduct whole and sound and forgive your sins. He that obeys Allah and His messenger has attained the great victory" (S33, A70-1)*



Brothers and sisters, ASA.

I have had a difficult time deciding on a topic for today's khutbah. In general, I feel that a khutbah should focus on increasing our knowledge and understanding of our beautiful religion, and this in turn should help us become better Muslims. We tend to focus on general concepts, such as improving our Iman, improving our conduct and relations with those around us, both Muslim and non-Muslim, and so on. These teachings serve a general purpose, and that is to better the society that we live in. This is the message of Islam. It is a message that has been devised to better society. It is a message of reform.

When the Prophet<sup>(SAAWS)</sup> addressed the first wave of Ansar in the first pledge of Aqaba, this is what he asked them to pledge:

- Do not associate with Allah,
- do not steal,
- do not commit adultery,
- do not kill your children,
- do not utter slander, intentionally forging falsehood and
- do not disobey me in any just matter.

He who keeps to this pledge, Allah will reward him; and he who neglects any of it and is punished for his sin in this world, it may prove a redemption for him in the Hereafter; and if the sin remains hidden from the eyes of people and no grief (punishment) comes to him in this world, then his affair is with Allah. He may forgive him and He may not.

This pledge starts with the absolute message of believing in the One Allah. It then defines particular changes in one's conduct for the benefit of oneself and the benefit of society. And finally it gives the warning of the judgment in the hereafter.

The message of Islam is about bettering the society in the context of a belief in Allah and the Day of Judgment. It defines our relationship with each other within the context of our relationship with our creator.

In itself, this is a very hard message to get through, and it is even a harder message to adhere to. Muslims have the right to ask the question; why should I be involved in reform, when those around me don't even want to know me. As a Muslim, I am perceived as being backward, dogmatic, oppressive, insular and so on. So why should I even bother to involve myself in reform?

Muslims have had a pretty difficult time adjusting to current political tides that are turning against them. Muslims have also had a difficult time adjusting to changes in the rules that govern society. We are challenged in our beliefs, we are challenged in our moral stance, we are challenged for the way we dress, the way we worship and many other aspects of our religion and life. So why should we be involved in reform? One would suggest that let me get on with my life, keep a low profile and avoid all

this agro. One may even say; I have enough problems as it is, I don't need any more. Let this society reform itself, if they want my opinion, let them ask for it.

But is this what Islam is about? Are we as Muslims satisfied with our selves by simply standing on the edge of society looking from outside in. Or do you feel that as Muslims, we have a greater role to play. This is the most difficult problem that we face as Muslims, and that is to **put Islam into practice in this society**.

However, we cannot even start before we embrace Islam in the way it should be embraced. We cannot preach what we do not do:

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٢﴾ كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ  
تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣﴾

***“O you who believe! why do you say that which you do not do? It is most hateful to Allah that you should say that which you do not do” (S61, A2-3)***

This aya clearly tells me that we Muslims cannot even start thinking about reforming society before we have reformed ourselves. Because of that, most our khutbahs focus on the issue of internal reform. Let us first get ourselves and our act together. Let us sort the conflicts we have with the “shaitan” within, and then we can start with the conflicts outwith. The carrot for doing so has always been the prize of the hereafter. From the same sura of the previous two ayas we read:

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا هَلْ أَذُكُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ تِجَارَةٍ تُنْجِيكُمْ  
مِّنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿١٠﴾ تُوْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُجَاهِدُونَ فِي  
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ  
﴿١١﴾ يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَيُدْخِلْكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا  
الْأَنْهَارُ وَمَسَاكِينٌ طَيِّبَةً فِي جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٢﴾

***“O you who believe! Shall I guide you to a trade that will save you from a grievous Penalty? Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and strive (your utmost) in the Cause of Allah, with your wealth and yourselves. That will be best for you, if you but knew! He will forgive your sins, and admit you to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow, and to beautiful mansions in Gardens of Eternity: that is indeed the Supreme Achievement” (S61, A10-2)***

For Muslims, the goal is set high, it is Paradise. It is the understanding of Muslims that as long as I am a good Muslim, as long as I pray, fast, give in charity, behave myself, and so on, I am safe. I will put up with what is being hurled at me in the knowledge that my ultimate prize is Paradise. To be honest, this is good enough for me, and it is probably good enough for most of us. I am quite sure that the fear of hell and the love of paradise are the two most focused on points in relation to what we do. But is this what it is all about. We need to get back to this basic question, is this what Islam is all about?

I have to always ask myself, what makes me a good Muslim in the sight of Allah? Am I happy with my Islam? Having worked on prayers, fasting, charity and so on, am I happy with my Islam? Am I there? Have I achieved what Allah has asked of me?

That, brothers and sisters, is the biggest problem of being a Muslim. **You cannot rest on your laurels.** Every time you achieve a goal in Islam, you realize that Islam tells you: move on. Every target you achieve is no more than a stepping stone to another target. So, now you may ask, where is this all leading to?

As we look around us today, Muslims, and everyone else on this tiny earth are having to deal with difficult problems. I am not talking about problems of gender identity, or about freedom of expression, or about terrorism. These, and many other similar problems, tend to easily wet the appetite of Muslims, and get them involved in heated debates. They get us involved in a flash, and we will always have something to say. But, these are not the problems I had in mind.

The problems I had in mind are different. The problems I had in mind are not on the top of the Muslim's agenda, and probably understandably so. The problems I had in mind do not get our blood boiling, and probably tend to produce very little reaction. I will mention one such problem only, and then we can ask ourselves, as Muslims, does this get us going? Do we have an opinion?

One of the gravest problems that is facing our globe is that of the environment.

Is our blood suddenly boiling when we mention the environment? Do we start shouting; an attack on the environment is an attack on Islam. Do we shout; we Muslims will not sit idle and do nothing as we see the environment being abused? Do we see Muslims going down the high street with banners saying; down with big 4X4s, down with big guzzlers, and so on. Probably not.

What about if I say what do you think about the recent arrests in Birmingham? Now that is something worth talking about.

Brothers and sisters, that is the problem that I have with myself as a Muslim today. Events are moving on so fast, I do not have time to adjust. I don't have time to deal with the environment. I have enough problems as it is. Let someone else deal with it. I want to deal with issues that relate to Islam, and not whether I put a glass bottle in the correct recycling container.

Well, I am afraid, as a Muslim, I do not have a choice. Putting a glass bottle in the correct container is just as much an issue in Islam as is everything else. The

environment should be a massive issue for me and for us all. If I want to follow in the footsteps of the Prophet<sup>(SAAWS)</sup> then I have to be involved in the welfare of the environment.

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ  
الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٢١﴾

***“You have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful example (to follow) for any one whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day, and who remembers Allah much” (S33, A21)***

As a Muslim, should I be interested in the environment. Should I be interested in the welfare of animals, in the conservation of resources which includes recycling.

The Prophet<sup>(SAAWS)</sup> was indeed a great environmentalist, and was a staunch advocate of environmental protection. He was a pioneer in aspects of conservation, sustainable development and resource management. From all accounts of his life and deeds, we read that the Prophet<sup>(SAAWS)</sup> had a profound respect for the environment. He was a strong proponent of the sustainable use and cultivation of land and water, proper treatment of animals, plants and birds, and the equal rights of users. From the Sirah of the Prophet<sup>(SAAWS)</sup>, we recognize that his environmental philosophy has been clearly defined by his actions and words.

The Prophet<sup>(SAAWS)</sup> said: *“There is none amongst the believers who plants a tree, or sows a seed, and then a bird, or a person, or an animal eats thereof, but it is regarded as having given a charitable gift [for which there is great recompense].”* [Al-Bukhari, III:513].

The three most important principles of the Prophet’s philosophy of nature are based on the Qur’anic teachings and the concepts of *tawhid* (unity), *khilafa* (stewardship) and *amana* (trust).

*Tawhid*, is a cornerstone of the Islamic faith. We recognizes the fact that there is one absolute Creator and that man is responsible to Him for all his actions:

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيطًا ﴿١٢٦﴾

***“To God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth, for God encompasses everything [4:126].”***

The Prophet acknowledged that God's knowledge and power covers everything. Therefore abusing one of his creations, whether it is a living being or a natural resource, is a sin. The Prophet considered all of God’s creations to be equal before God and that all these creations also should have rights.

The concepts of *khilafa*, stewardship, and *amana*, trust, emerge from the principle of *tawhid*. The Qur'an explains that mankind holds a privileged position among God's creations on earth: he is chosen as *khalifa*, "vice-regent" and carries the responsibility of caring for God's earthly creations. Each individual is given this task and privilege in the form of God's trust. But the Quran repeatedly warns believers against arrogance: they are no better than other creatures.

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَّمٌ أَمْثَالُكُمْ

***“No creature is there on earth nor a bird flying with its wings but they are nations like you [6:38]”;***

لَخَلْقُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ خَلْقِ النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

***“Surely the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of man; but most people know not [40:57]”.***

The Prophet<sup>(SAAWS)</sup> reminds us that the universe and the creations in it – animals, plants, water, land – were not created for mankind. People are allowed to use the resources but they can never own them. The ownership is to Allah.

وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Thus while Islam allows land ownership, the limitation is that as the owner one has to make good use of it. The Prophet recognized man's responsibility to God but always maintained humility. We are all probably familiar with the hadeeth:

*“When doomsday comes, if someone has a palm shoot in his hand, he should plant it”.* This hadeeth tells us that even when all hope is lost for mankind, one should sustain nature's growth. Islam tells us that nature remains a good in itself, even if man does not benefit from it. Planting a tree, sowing a seed and irrigating dry land are all regarded as charitable deeds in Islam.

The Prophet<sup>(SAAWS)</sup> taught the believers to share the earth's resources. *“No one can refuse giving surplus water without sinning against Allah and against man” [Mishkat al Masabih].*

The Prophet's attitude towards sustainable use of land, conservation of water and the treatment of animals is a further illustration of the humility of his environmental philosophy.

Islam stands against the overexploitation or abuse of resources. Even though Allah has made the earth as subservient to man;

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ

*“do you not see that Allah has subserved to you (mankind) all that is in this world”*

we recognise that it should not be overexploited or abused, and that this earth has rights. In order to protect land, forests and wildlife, over 1400 years ago, the Prophet created safe zones known as *hima* and *haram*, in which resources were to be left untouched. *haram* areas are usually drawn up around wells and water sources to protect the groundwater table from over-pumping. *Hima* applies usually to wildlife and forestry designating an area of land where grazing and woodcutting are restricted, or where certain animal species are protected. Are these ideas relevant for us today.

Islam teaches us to respect all life, and that includes animals.

*“If anyone wrongfully kills even a sparrow, let alone anything greater, he will face God's interrogation” [Mishkat al Masabih].*

Throughout the life of the Prophet<sup>(SAAWS)</sup> we find examples of what Islam teaches us about our responsibility to animals. The Prophet<sup>(SAAWS)</sup> always showed respect and love towards animals. All animals are part of God's creation, and Islam is clear on the fact that we should treat animals with dignity and compassion. Even when it came to the slaughter of animals, the Prophet showed great gentleness and sensitivity. Islam teaches us that the slaughter of an animal should be as humane and as quick as possible. The Prophet<sup>(SAAWS)</sup> warned against slaughtering an animal in the presence of other animals, or even letting the animal witness the sharpening of blades: to him that was equal to “slaughtering the animal twice” and he emphatically condemned such practices as “abominable”.

Does environment matters in Islam? Do I need to be involved, or is it still not my business?

أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ لِي وَلكم

2<sup>nd</sup> Khutbah:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ثُمَّ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ. الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ  
أَنْفُسِنَا وَسَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا. أَمَا بَعْدُ:

وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ ﴿٧﴾ أَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيزَانِ ﴿٨﴾

***“And the sky He has uplifted; and He has set the balance; That you may not transgress the balance” (S55, A7-8)***

Is the environment relevant to me as a Muslim. Can I ignore my responsibilities to the environment and still consider myself as a good Muslim.

In these two ayas, Allah tells us that there is a balance in creation, and that we are not allowed to transgress this balance. Why?

With the potential catastrophic impact of global warming, political analysts are already contemplating that this threat is even greater than the perceived threats of terrorism. Transgressing the balance that Allah(SWT) has set in this world is potentially catastrophic. That is why.

Brothers and sisters, we have no where to hide from our responsibilities to our limited environment and our limited resources. I am not in a position to tell you what each and every one should do. I myself am just as guilty if not more so than most in the way I abuse my environment. The message is that when we leave today, we make a pledge that we will start looking at environmental issues more closely and carefully, and start being responsible. This is Islam; we cannot avoid our responsibilities to the environment just as much as we cannot avoid our responsibilities to our acts of worship.

Recycling is Islamic. Eating more vegetables and less meat is Islamic. Conserving resources is Islamic. Fighting against whaling is Islamic, and the list goes on.