



[Islam Raises the Dignity of the Human Being:](#)  
Civic and Personal Responsibility for the Benefit of All

Duas. Allah in the Holy Qur'an in Surah al-Mu'minun reveals, after telling about those who forget His remembrance:

**O you who choose to mock then to the point where it made you forget My Remembrance while you laughed at them, surely this day I have rewarded them for their steadfast patience. Truly, they are the ones who are triumphant. And Allah will say, "How many years did you remain on the earth?" And they will say, "We stayed there a day or part of a day. Ask those who keep count." And He will say, "You spent but a short time there, if only you knew."**

Also, we say every day:

**Allah does not burden any soul except with what it can bear, and to its account is what is merited by its goodness, and against it is what it has earned by the way of evil it did. Our Lord! Do not condemn us if we forget or unwittingly do wrong. Our Lord! Do not lay a burden upon us as you laid upon those who came before us. Our Lord! Do not burden us with what we have no strength to bear. Pardon us, forgive us, and have mercy on us. You are our Master, so aid us against the people who cover up the truth.**

The Prophet (sal) said:

*O community of people who believe by their tongue, and belief did not enter their hearts, do not backbite Muslims, do not search their faults, for if anyone searches for their faults, Allah will search for his fault. If Allah searches for the fault of anyone, he disgraces him in his house.*

Of course, Allah says: **“Deemed you that We created you for naught, and that you would not be returned to us?”**

The topic of the *khutbah* today is about attitude, about dignity and responsibility as human beings and individuals, and the capacity we have to live with dignity. *Inshā’-Llāh*, Allah will give us the ability to speak on this for a while. It’s obvious from these ‘*āyāt* and so many others in Qur’an that the individual has a very important status in Islam. Allah does not want to burden us with a burden we cannot bear. Allah reminds us we will return to Him. And there are many ‘*āyāt* concerning our duties and responsibilities that I have not recited. One of the greatest contributions that Islam as a religion / *dīn* has made to social philosophy, and one would hope in the times we are living in, political philosophy and religious and spiritual thought, is the concept of individual rights and dignity. Islam gave real status and dignity to human beings and raised them higher in esteem than ever they had been raised before in the collective group.

Before Islam, honor, dignity and rights had been reserved for special groups of individuals. There are exceptions, of course, and there were trials and experimentations in Greece and in the Persian empire. But in its collective sense, Islam establishes for everyone this roadway to self-esteem and dignity. Before that, perhaps it was based on a person’s wealth, their birthright, the level of society they found themselves in. Islam destroyed those differences, and presented the concept of human honor and dignity fully. Would that we could stand here today and say that every Muslim understood it or abided by it, or even today understands it and abides by it. Unfortunately, it’s not true. We can’t say that. But we can see some light on the horizon. I think it’s noteworthy to say it’s coming out of Islamic countries. We still want to see it coming out of Iran again; and we

want to see it coming out of Syria. But we can say there's something inherent in this *dīn* that stimulates people toward this dignity and freedom.

You can't build a building in the air; you have to have it on a foundation. We can at least say the foundation for this does lie in Islam, and some buildings have been built on it, and many of them haven't been completed yet. Allah (swt) said: **"We have created men indeed in the best of modes,"** and he deserves dignity and honor as a human being because of that. The excellence that we have within us can be brought forward by the right practice of our *dīn*. Especially for those of us who follow Tasawwuf, we have a universal quality in the way we think. So we encourage everyone to practice this. At the same time, Allah (swt) also said: **"Then We abased him to the lowest of the low."** And we certainly have seen that. That is so we would be sure that each one of us would have both a sense of honor and dignity as well as humility, because they have to go together.

Everyone has tests and trials in their life. We don't know the highest level of living until we have experienced some of the lows of life. Human beings, out of their own negligence and fears rebel against their own good nature, and we reduce ourselves to the lowest of the low.

**O mankind! Surely, We have created you from a male and a female, and We have made you tribes and families so that you may know one another. Surely, the noblest of you with Allah is the most righteous of you.**

Yet you note that none of this had to do with a person's social status or wealth. Everyone stands equally honored as human beings according to this *āyat* in the Qur'an. It denies with a lot of emphasis that anyone can claim more dignity and more honor than anyone else. It also tells us there should be no discrimination in individuals except in goodness; in the sense that relative goodness should inspire us, which is a basis and a foundation for

building a good society. We also know that human beings have this tendency to bring themselves down. The entire philosophy of the Islamic view of human creation is the endowment of the Divine upon human beings for a special capacity of knowledge, and a special responsibility for that knowledge. Each one of us, male or female, poor or wealthy, from a developed or undeveloped place or nation, can draw from the potential in each human being. Even people who are in a physical or mental state of loss can improve their state.

Everything points to the importance of an individual and how they function in their action and in their conduct, not just as an individual, but also as members in the community. Whether we are talking about communities called nations, or this community, you have to take the time to contemplate the gifts and opportunities and challenges to be met. “In the community” means with the cooperation of other members of the community. It means your schedule, capabilities, contributions, understandings, your role as a student, your role as a teacher. As a parent, as a neighbor, every one of us has to work in the community, with the community, for the community in order to realize our self, realize the importance of our individuality. This is so, partly because it will help to create an environment favorable to the mission of Allah (swt), of course.

Without communities built on these principles, the individual’s function and mission becomes difficult and even impossible. Partly because of this concept, the human being will be able to establish an infrastructure and mechanism to invite others toward Allah (swt), or toward one’s work, towards those qualities and principles we know as the principles of Allah (swt), towards our mission, towards our actions and attitudes that are good and beneficial. This is the real *dawa*. This is the real essence of Islam and of being a Muslim. It is based on capability and responsibility of the individual within the community.

The establishment of justice between human beings and the results of it will be the activity and work of the human being and of the collective of human beings. . Though it's centered on the effort of the individual, it is in cooperation and conjunction with other individuals to organize work to create success within the community. Each one of us helps to establish justice, both on an individual and collective level. In the final analysis, it is the individual and not the society that is to be tested and judged, and who will reap the gains or pay the price of one's judgments and actions. Each one of our efforts to organize a group of us who believe in and strive to live by values and ideology based on the principles of *tawhid*, submission, security and safety, and on the principle of a sustainable community and society is meant to really create a civilization that will illustrate by its actions, infrastructure, values and fullness, the critical and creative thinking values to others, so that humanity can truly and finally understand the purpose of the larger creation of life, and to continue to follow the way of Allah (swt).

We know that the actions of any one individual can strongly affect not only the whole community, but the way the community is viewed—for example, the actions of the person who shot Gaddafi. This may be the axial point on which way the society goes, whether people affirm justice in the midst of emotion and injustice – no question about the injustices committed by this tyrant – or not. So no one should reduce in their own minds the importance of any one individual's attitude or action. In this life, which is a struggle, sometimes it happens, perhaps often, that individual lives are even to be sacrificed for the sake of society, so that the generations that follow will continue to be free, receive the guidance, and develop themselves in a right and healthy way.

I refer you to the story of Musa and Khdir that you find in the Holy Qur'an. If these sacrifices are not done, or if they are made for objectives that are material – even as well

meaning as those objectives may be: the freedom of a people, the exploitation of someone else – they are nonetheless, material. They cannot be made for ideological reasons. They have to be made for deeply spiritual reasons. There is no reason, and no justification, for a person deciding themselves that they are going to sacrifice themselves for some ideological perspective or point of view. Short term goals may be fine, but the future generations of individuals, if they fail to find their guidance in the right ways, in good actions and in tolerance, patience, and trust in Allah, will wander away from the straight path no matter what name they call themselves. Look at how many lives have been sacrificed for the wrong reasons for generations, and how far humanity has wandered away from the *siratal mustaqim*. Look at how split human beings are, how much war there is, how much ethnic violence, how much disagreement and misery human beings impose upon one another.

On the other hand, look at the changes that are coming about. Look at how people have gathered together by consensus. They have gathered together with hope in their hearts to make a better world for everyone. The idea of sacrifice, as it comes down from our father Ibrahim (as), is that it is for a purpose and transcends the worldly ideas and personal desires. If people do commit themselves for the right reasons, and even sacrifice their lives, then the guidance will be there for them to develop their true self. Individuals will be able to grow and develop and pass that capability on for generations upon generations. In Surah Baqarah as we know, it says, "**And spend of your substance in the cause of Allah, and make not your own hands contribute to your destruction.**" You see the distinction is clear. No one can take the life of them self. We can only make the sacrifices that Allah (swt) lays upon us.

What happened [in the story of Ibrahim and the sacrifice]? As we know, the Eid al Adha is coming up. Allah didn't even allow that sacrifice to take place. It was only the

willingness, the submission. Whether we are talking environmentally, politically, socially, in the family, or psychologically and emotionally within our own self, we are warned; we are cautioned that we have a duty to establish and maintain the *siratal mustaqim* as the way of Allah, as the way out of difficulties, as the way into peace and tranquility. It's true that this requires sacrifices at times, patience and perseverance, especially repentance and forgiveness. It requires energy; it requires money; and sometimes the health and lives of people, generation after generation. Our generation will pass. What are we leaving behind for the next generation? That's also sacrifice.

But without this, not only the two and half to three generations who sit in this room, but the future generations are endangered. I don't say Islam is endangered; I say humanity is endangered. There is no sustainability of values. Just like the earth and nature are endangered by the same negative mentality, everything that has to do with nature is endangered today. We are an endangered species as human beings, not in the sense that we are going to become extinct because we are not reproducing. But we are endangered because the whole point of our existence is endangered. You take wild animals, put them in a cage, and they lose their ability to live outside the cage. Then what? You have taken their nature from them. Even if you have a lot of them, they are endangered, because they cannot continue their natural way of life. We will bring people and the world to ruin in the same way.

If we ruin the world today, we will ruin it for future generations. If we have no sense of values within ourselves, how do we pass values on to future generations? If we have no thought for justice, how will justice emerge in future generations? Disbelievers, which in this case means materialistic individuals, ideologically foolish people who would stand in the way of progress just for political reasons or economic reasons, financial reasons, and

greed, people who live only for now and collect things only for their own pleasures, or indulge themselves in a non-material ways in their own states of mind and emotional melange, will dominate in the society. We see the rise and the fall of these influences over the past hundred and some years. We see that the negativity, the distrust, the suspicion, the psycho-emotional imbalances begin to dominate society. It creates a condition that encourages wrong doing, and deprives the present generation as well as future generations of right guidance. Who is there to look up to? Who are the heroes of today? Even the heroes, if they act by good rules, find themselves disdained by the people who have a short memory and understanding.

I remember after Obama was made President of this country by the people, and took “by the people and for the people” very seriously, I wrote a letter to the White House. I said, “Tell the people that the country is suffering from a cancer. But it’s a cureable cancer. But it has to go through radiotherapy, chemotherapy and other forms of cancer. Because of that, it will get sicker in order to get better. And it will take 3-5 years minimum to get better. Tell the people that, because everybody can identify with that. Everybody knows someone with cancer, or someone in the family who had cancer.” That was my advice to the White House. It wasn’t taken. It wasn’t heard, unfortunately. People then would now have another, different attitude. If that was the theme of the President for the last 2.5 years, people would be saying, we have to give him 5 years. And he would have to live up to it. And everybody would have to report for therapy. That’s true! Otherwise, we wind up in a sort of living hell.

The Qur'an has in a very few words condensed the whole human history, where sacrifices are needed to establish a true and righteous society, to protect it from enemies inside and outside, from the "*Wass-wass. Whisperer.*" Those who do not make the sacrifices, who

are not willing to expand themselves, are doomed by their own self. They (we) are not willing to spend our wealth, our time, or our comfort. We are not willing to contribute with our own hands the goods we have, the time we have, knowing that Allah will return it to us tenfold, or a hundred fold. We are contributing to our own destruction. The enemies, you may note, are always willing to make sacrifices. They make them for the wrong thing. Look at what these suicide bombers do. They are sacrificing the greatest gift for the wrong reason. Why they can make such an impression is because everyone else wants to sit there very comfortably and not change anything. The enemies are sending someone into battle to die in the name of something for the good of one, two, five, ten or a hundred people, or maybe more.

Take another look. Look back at Libya. Look at Yemen today. Look at Egypt today and the struggles there. Look at all the places in the world: Tunisia, Algeria. Look in the world where there are despots who send people to die in battle to die, against their own people, just for what? For power. It has to be for power. If it was for money, they could all take the money they have in Switzerland and go live there. Couldn't they? The enemy has no problem making sacrifices. The enemy is the enemy of truth, of compassion, of peace, the enemy of love, of patience, tolerance, the enemy of cooperation, the enemy of all that is good. They exploit resources, making people work hard, day and night for almost nothing. They exploit people's intelligence; they threaten them and their families to get their capabilities out of them. They appeal to the lowest denomination of human nature. They do that to protect the wrong and evil systems, and expect no punishment here or in the Hereafter.

Have in your mind the pictures of Gadaffy being pulled out of a sewage conduit pipe. In a sense, they are somewhat free to exploit, for temporary and short-lived gains, pleasures,

and enjoyments. Forty-two years is a long time in human life, but a short time in the history of humanity. People sacrifice their health every day for their physical pleasures. They sacrifice their values for their own desires. They betray one another for those desires. At the same time, people who are believers, who try to follow Sunnah and have a lot of happiness and peace in this life, sometimes we find them withholding exactly what is needed: it may be their wealth, time, knowledge or intelligence. Even good people who pray and follow Sunnah fear letting go, and hold on when there is need around them. We sit comfortably in our homes. We are blessed to have jobs. We are blessed to even have dreams. I don't think they are illusions, but there may be a fantasy every once in a while. And we let someone else fight the enemy with sticks and stones when the enemy has nuclear weapons.

We all have to participate in the well-being of the community, our own and the greater community. Isn't it obvious that if we have a lack of generosity there is destruction? It destroys our own destiny. If we don't have the money to fix the buildings, they will fall down. If we don't have the money to fix the roads, our tires will fall into the potholes. If we don't have the means to fix the heating system, we will all be freezing. Or in the summer, we will be too hot. And you know I wouldn't like that, right? It's obvious that lack of generosity causes destruction. The Qur'an clearly points out to us that we are created alone, as individuals, not in groups. We are not created in a group (except for twins or multiple births). We are created as individuals. Each one of us is expected to play our part in the establishment of society, social system, or civilization as an individual.

The concept of individual participation, rights, claims and property remain the center point on this earth for all cultures and civilizations. The Qur'an asks people to remember that we were created singly, and it says we will meet Allah again on the Day of Awakening alone

and singly. **"And they will be marshalled into ranks and greeted with, 'Now you come to Us bare and alone as We created you at first.'"** Individuality is ultimately important. We are individuals and on our own, and not as any group or community will we be held accountable. Yet, what we do as a community is what will make us accountable before Allah as individuals. We won't come before Allah as the World Community and say, "She screwed up a little, but that person balanced it out." "He messed up, but because of her, he got straightened out." That's not the way that works. The Qur'an makes it very clear that the individual is sovereign, and alone will appear before Allah. Yet it is their actions, their taking their responsibility with nature, with one another, with their families, with their brothers and sisters in the community.

Who are these people? An *ummah*. We are an *ummah*. This *jamat* is an opportunity for us. For us, it is *suhbat*. Even though as an individual we have to carry on our responsibilities, Allah will not give us a burden we cannot bear. Even though we are to act as individuals, our growth and development depends on how we interact as individuals. The ultimate success or failure of our spiritual and physical self will depend on how we act with one another. We will benefit or lose depending on our own actions. Each one of us can only follow the right way, take the right guidance, and surround ourselves by the right people in the right environment. Whether or not we fulfill our personal responsibility will depend on whether or not our personal responsibility is reflected in the community we are a part of.

The whole dream of community is a reflection of the drama of life. The drama of human played out on earth comes to an end one day when every actor in this drama or play comes forward for the applause or the boos. The nature of our life on this earth will testify for us or against us, and we will be judged on the basis of our performance. Nothing else will influence that. At the same time, we have to remember that this very serious subject we are

talking about is something we should not forget. It is a very serious matter. The role of the individual is most important from the viewpoint of our self, because it determines our position at the end of life. It also determines the future course of our life after this life.

In Islam, we don't believe life ends with this physical life; it goes forward. Therefore, it is very essential for each one of us to be conscious of our duties, responsibilities, and demands that are made on us, and our duties to one another. If we fail to realize how serious this is and we waste our valuable time and energies in useless excuse-making, useless action and indolence, and fear of loss, we will destroy ourselves through our ignorance and face a terrible end for a very long time. We have to give very serious thought to the purpose of this creation, with special emphasis on the position of human beings (that is us) in relationship to Allah and our fellow beings. Society exists to provide each individual, according to Islam, with the right kind of environment, the right company, the good facilities and conditions under which each one of us may or may not attain a higher level of humaneness. But it's our choice by developing and purifying our self, our *nafs ammāra*, *nafs lawwama*, *nafs mut'mainna*, etc.; by realizing our goals, physically, emotionally, spiritually; by enriching our culture, enriching our community, and expanding our life.

The real goal of the true believer is to work hard in life to enrich the culture and global civilization, to enrich the local community, for the attainment of higher states of human consciousness. That's Islam. We help in the advancement of our society, materially and spiritually, so that humanity in general may follow the way of goodness, purity, and justice as much as possible. We, ourselves, have to leave aside the desire for material rewards, in any form from anyone, and to obey the commands of Allah. But Allah rewards us anyway. Those who honor such individuals will gain the honor themselves. When the individual

accomplishes this, Allah says, **"To the righteous soul will be said, 'O you soul in complete peace and satisfaction, come back to your Lord well pleased and well-pleasing to Him. Enter you among My servants, enter you My Paradise.'"**

This is the end of the story. The assignment of the *khalifat*, the viceregency, our free will and freedom to act, our need for individual success, growth, and freedoms on the basis of equality, equity and liberty is so that each one of us can endeavor to free ourselves, experience freedom, cooperate with one another, and form a society in which we can work together for the benefit of everyone. This is the ultimate teaching of Islam: citizen participation, civic responsibility, and personal responsibility for the benefit of all. We are to establish systems for that to take place, under which freedom can reign for individuals and collectively. Will there be exceptions? Of course. Will there be people who don't understand it? Yes. Will there be people who abuse it? Of course. Will people need to be helped back on to the straight path? Of course. Is that a religious requirement? It is a spiritual requirement of Allah (swt).

It is a requirement of compassion, mercy, love, tolerance, peace and justice, and understanding and sacrifice and repentance. It is not a thing. It makes people secure enough to bring out the sweet, wonderful, blessed qualities of Allah (swt) in each one of us. And we will fail, and we will get up again, and again, and again until the paradigm shifts. Society and the community itself assists each individual to attain the goal set for them by Allah. And each one of us has to walk through that gate. There is no bribe that will get us through it. There is no intercessor that will get us through it, but good references do help. Those references come in the form of *du'ā*, of appreciation and belonging.

Remember the story of the person who passed, and came to the gate of Paradise. It was said to him, “You cannot come in.” He said, “Oh, I was a student of Abdul Qadir Jilani (ra).” “Oh, then, come in.” Someone else waiting out there said, “I, too, was a student!” “Oh, no! You heard what that man said, but you were not a student.” So, good references help. Don’t think your role is only to ask for *du’ā*. Many people say to me every day, “O Shaykh, make *du’ā* for me.” I’ve started a book to write down the name of everyone who asks for *du’ā*, so late at night I can read just the names. I realize I am forgetting. Maybe they don’t need it anymore by that time, but their name will be mentioned anyway. There can be hundreds of names on that list. But you need to make *du’ā*, also. You need to make *du’ā* for one another, for this community, for the world. Make *du’ā*. You are not just a recipient of *du’ā*. You have to make *du’ā*... every one of us... children, too. Think about it. *Bismillah*.

SECOND KHUTBAH We ask You, Allah, to keep our community healthy, make us have trust in You, be generous, and trust that You will give back to us many fold all that we give. Keep us strong, O Allah, so that the children sitting here will have a legacy in this community and work in this community, so that truly a light would shine from here across all humanity and lift up all humanity. We have proven it can be done, O Allah. Help us to sustain it. Please, Allah, give us a 36,000 day light bulb! *Amin*.