



Fundamental and Universal Rights Laid Down in Islam

Directions and Standards for the Righteous Muslim

Allah Swt says:

Truly piety does not consist in turning your faces in the direction of the East and the West, but true piety is to securely believe in Allah and the Final Day, and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and to give of one's wealth, however much one loves it, to one's kin, the orphans, the poor, the wayfarer, the beggar and free people from bondage, and to stand for the *salah* and render the *zakah*, and to carry out one's promises when one promises, and to be steadfast in misfortune and hardship and intense peril. These are those who are true in their faith, and these are those who consciously safeguard themselves for Allah.

Allah says in Surah al-Imran:

And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord. And guard wide His heavens and the earth prepared for those who guard themselves, those who spend of that which Allah has provided for them in ease and in adversity, and those who control their anger, and those who pardon the faults of the people. And Allah loves those who excel.

My dear brothers and sisters in Islam, Islam has laid down some very universal and fundamental rights for humanity that are to be observed and respected under all circumstances regardless of events. To achieve these rights, Islam provides not only legal safeguards, but also a very effective ethical and moral system; thus, whatever leads to the welfare of the individual or society is morally good in Islam, ethically

right, and upright. That's a very important sentence, because sometimes it's not understood correctly. And whatever is injurious is immoral and unethical. Islam attaches so much importance to the love of Allah Swt, and the love of creation, and His creatures. It warns us against too much formalism or rigorous adherence to just form, as opposed to understanding eventually what is good and what has meaning in its intention.

As I read to you from Surah al-Baqarah and Surah al-Imran, we are given a very beautiful description of the righteous people and the people who are aware of Allah, who are conscious of Allah. These God- or Allah-conscious beings in these verses, *inshā'a-llāh*, we would all hope and strive to be, and encourage our children to be from the cradle to the grave. They are such who should obey the regulations, but in addition to that, we should fix our gaze on the love of Allah Swt and the love that we should have, certainly, toward our fellow human beings. There are four directions that are given. We will hear them today and forget them as we walk out the door, *astaghfirh -llāh*. Perhaps we might remember them as far as the kitchen, maybe to our homes, but something, surely, will happen.

Our faith should be true. It should be sincere. We have to be prepared to show our faith in deeds of charity to all human beings, and indeed, to all living creatures and all living things.

What is charity? That is a whole other *dars*, but we know it begins with even removing a stone from the path.

We must be good citizens, and support the social organizations that are in the service of human beings. Our own individual souls should be firm, clear, and unshaken no matter what the circumstances are.

That's where we forget: "*no matter what the circumstances are.*" This is the standard by which every mode of behavior or conduct is judged, and it is classified clearly as good or bad, right or wrong, righteous or unrighteous. The standard of judgment provides the core or the nucleus around which the whole ethical and moral system and conduct of individuals in society as a whole should revolve. The unspoken aspect in all of this is remembrance. We talked about *dhikr* last night in a very comprehensive way in terms of the lexical meaning of it. I really encourage everyone who wasn't here to bear with that talk last night, because it really impresses upon us the depth of the meaning of these terms, wherever they originate.

Why I say what's missing in this is *dhikr*, is in the sense of what we discussed last night. It is not just remembrance. Does anyone remember the other meaning of *dhikr* from last night? (Masculine, male, to penetrate). Right. To penetrate, like a spear point. The reason I say that is because that's what happens. Things don't penetrate us. We hear it; it stays on the surface, and it's easily washed away. Understand that every one of these directions that are given to us has an element of remembrance to it. It has to penetrate in us. In other words, a situation happens. You wish it didn't happen. You repent of it. You reflect upon it. You seek a way out of that state into a better state. That's *dhikr*. You are actually remembering some aspect of Allah Swt in that moment.

Standards are obviously important in Islam. But before laying down moral and ethical injunctions, what Islam seeks to firmly imprint on not just the mind, but on the heart of an individual, is the conviction that one's dealings with Allah Swt must be correct and must come from the heart. I gave the example last night of piercing the body and the blood comes. Allah sees us at all times and all places. The idea that

we can hide ourselves from the world might dwell in our minds, but we have to remember that we cannot hide ourselves from Allah. How do we know that? Because as soon as we do something that we wish we didn't say, do, act, or think – we know it. We are not one of those who do not know it. We know we are not hiding from Allah. Don't we?

Why do we know that? If we were so smart, we would have not said or done it in the first place. If we were so attuned, we never would have made the error in the first place. So what's reminding us? This is *dhikr*. That's us. But do you accept that for someone else? Or do you hold them to a standard that you don't hold your own self? When somebody repents, do you accept the repentance, or seeks forgiveness, or apologizes? Your own emotional state, mental state, arrogance or whatever gets in the way. Where is Allah in all that? We may realize how easy it is to deceive ourselves or others, or convince ourselves that something is right that might not be right. We may feel adept at running from unpleasant circumstances, even from people we don't like, who threaten us, and even those who might help us. But we cannot run from Allah Swt.

That means we can't run from our own memory, if we have that memory. If we have that memory, if we have that knowledge, then we ought to sit down and say, "Well, I have it; I have to do something with it." We must set what we term "Allah's pleasure," the desire to please Allah as our objective in our lives. Islam furnishes the highest standard of this kind of ethic and behavior, because it focuses on *akhlaq* and the development of character. It is bound to provide limitless avenues for the evolution and character of an individual, as well as for humanity as a whole. By making the Divine revelations as primary sources of knowledge, and not secondary, it gives permanence, stability, clarity to standards that afford a reasonable scope of adjustments and adaptations, and even innovations at times, as long as they are in

line with what we call the Shar'iah and the Sunnah. [It cannot be] for any kind of destructive purpose, perversions, or variations. It provides a sanction for us that we relate to one another in our relationships in love, even in our relationship with Allah, in terms of our *taqwa*. What I like to say *taqwa* is not fear of Allah, but respectful anxiety of the Divine Presence.

Those moments of pause that make us reflect upon our actions, our thoughts, are the basis of our character and impels us to obey the standards and law without any external coercion. **“La ikraha fid-dīn.”** We don't compel anyone to religion. It doesn't just apply to compelling non-Muslims to Islam, or some kind of external form. There is internal coercion also. It applies to our relationship to Allah Swt as Muslims, through belief in Allah, in the Day of Awakening, in His principles and pillars. That furnishes us a force that enables us as individuals to adopt a type of conduct and ethic, individually, collectively, communally – a type of behavior that creates an environment that reaches into a very essential, physical, and spiritual reality of our lives, the biology of life and the spirituality of life; a type of behavior where we conduct ourselves earnestly, sincerely, and devotedly. When we don't, we repent.

There is no false sense of originality lying within us, no false innovation, no desire to create some novel basis of life, or some fictional basis of behavior. There is nothing within us that would minimize the importance of the standards or ethics that Allah Swt has provided for us in the example of the Prophet Mohammed (sal). Nor does it give us any excuse to exaggerate the importance of some people, some work, or some situation at the expense of neglecting others, the needs of others, or the needs of society. All good Muslims seek the importance in every circumstance, both for the individual and the collective to whom the circumstance applies. We find that we take up commonly known virtues with a sense of balance and proportion when we

are aligned. We assign a suitable place and function to each element of life, to each one of those situations in the total scheme of life.

The result is a real Muslim, who is a person who has a broad view of life, not a narrow view, who has tolerance and patience, not intolerance, who repents of their wrong actions, who looks for excuses to understand people and their shortcomings, and not to make *takfir*. A Muslim is a person who puts forth their best effort, and prays to Allah to give them the capability to do that. It means that a society of such people would be very attractive, the environment the most pleasant, the expressions the most useful, the language the most pleasant to hear, the world least polluting. Our domestic associations are civic institutions. Our personal conduct and activities – politically, economically, legalistically, educationally, socially, and religiously – are all balanced in this concept. This is the Islam that should cover our life, not just from the cradle to the grave, but from home to work to society at large. It has to cover from our breakfast table to making peace on a battlefield.

In short, we could say that no sphere of life, no element of life, no question that rises in life is exempt from some universal value. [When] something is understood comprehensively, it can be applied ethically and in principle. When ethics reign supreme in the world, and human beings live reassured of their safety and security, which is the meaning of Islam, instead of being dominated by selfish desires, or petty interests, or fears, or incursions of one person's desires or power over others, then we can say we are Muslims. And we can say that Islam exists. Without that, who are the Muslims, and where is the Islam?

I don't want to speak about the fragmentation of society. I don't want to bore you again and again by telling you about the fragmentation that exists today, though it is important to talk about civil society and where we are. We know the secular term,

“Acting locally is acting globally.” That’s true, and from our point of view, we have to understand that acting locally – within our own self – has a global reach. The broad spectrum of personal conduct and contact of a Muslim in their personal activities, in their social responsibilities, and in religious practices is important. Why is it that the religious activities tend to be the first ones to go or be postponed? Why is it we think that the deadlines of this world are more important than 5 minutes of prayer, or 20 minutes of *muraqabah*? Believe me, I have been searching for those answers for almost 40 years, and I don’t know the answer to it.

I *do* know it can be changed, and I do know that we change it, and fall back; we change it and fall back. I don’t know what there is to fear about spiritual practices. I don’t think people should be motivated out of guilt. If you remind a brother or sister, husband or wife, child or neighbor, “It’s time for prayer,” I don’t know why you get reactiveness sometimes. I don’t know why. **“The most honorable among you is the one who is most conscious of Allah”**(Qur’an) means conscious of those opportunities in the moment, conscious of those qualities that show you the Divine Presence; that reveal to you the knowledge of Allah Swt in the moment. If you have an inkling that you should be compassionate, if you have a moment that fleets through your mind of being merciful; if we have the slightest desire in us to be silent, when we could be saying something; or to apologize, or to seek the calmness and serenity for another human being, then we should seize it. That’s being God-consciousness or Allah-conscious.

Whether the moment brings forth from you humility or modesty, or controlling our desires, truthfulness, integrity, anger, patience, or steadfastness, we are all fulfilling a promise to Allah that was given by our soul in pre-eternity. And we are developing something in our self that, if we really do develop it, when you get to be my age, you don’t have to keep struggling with it.

Allah loves those who are firm and steadfast, and vie with each other for forgiveness from your Lord, and for Paradises wider than the heavens and the earth. For those who ward off evil or establish regular prayer, enjoin what is just, and forbid what is wrong, and bear patiently whatever may befall you, for this is true constancy. And do not swell your cheek with pride nor walk in insolence on the earth. But Allah does not love any man proud and boastful. And be moderate in your pace and lower your voice, for the harshest of sounds indeed is the braying of an ass.

If we can't take it seriously pre-event, we should take it seriously post- the event.
The Prophet (sal) said,

My Sustainer has given me nine commands: to remain conscious of Allah whether in private or in public... (check that one off; you all do that), to speak justly whether angry or pleased... (check that one off!), to show moderation both when poor and when rich, to reunite in friendship with those who have broken off from me, to give to him who refuses me that my silence should be occupied with thought, that my looking should be an admonition, and that I should command what is right.

What's next, since we have accomplished all that? *Wa'alahi*, I don't think anything more can be said. Nothing more needs to be said. That's our contract with Allah.
Asalaam aleikum.