

Khutbah

February 26, 2010



Title: [Endowment of the Divine](#):  
Nobility and Dignity through Responsibility

DVD title: The Purpose of Life:  
Achieved through Responsibility and Dignity

Opening Duas Asalāmu aleikum. Allah most High says in Holy Qur'an:

**Allah does not burden any soul except with what it can bear. To its account is what it has merited [by way of goodness], and against it what it has earned [by way of the evil it did]. “Our Lord, do not condemn us if we forget or unwittingly do wrong. Our Lord, do not lay a load on us as You burdened those who came before us. Our Lord, do not burden us with what we have no strength to bear. Pardon us. Forgive us. Have mercy on us. You are our Master, so aid us against the folk who cover up [the Truth].” (2:286)**

In Suratu-l-Imran, He says:

**Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth. “Our Lord, You have not created this in vain. Glory [be to] You! Preserve us from the punishment of the fire. (3:191)**

Today we can discuss some of the implications of these two ‘*āyāt*. Allah also reveals a similar concept in Suratu Saad:

**And We did not create the heaven and the earth and what is between them in vain. (38:27)**

The topic that I want to talk about in light of this is personal responsibility and personal dignity. Responsibility that each one of us has as individuals and what our capacity is to have that dignity. *Inshā'a-llāh*, Allah gives us the ability to speak clearly on this.

It is obvious from these quotations (and the so many more we could quote for Al-Qur'an) that Allah did not want to create this world or create us for no reason, or in vain, or as a play toy, or as a sport it is sometimes said. There is purpose in this. When you think about that, you say, "What is the purpose. Allah (swt) has everything. There is nothing to gain." There is a purpose to create something and to watch it grow, to create something and watch it become perfect, or become better or to gain merit, in and of itself. So we have pride in our children. We look at some art piece that is made. Maybe a teacher says, "Oh, maybe a teacher says, "I helped that person learn how to do that, and now look what they have accomplished by it."

There is no question in the person that they themselves have talent or they themselves have knowledge, but they impart that knowledge or talent to somebody else and they watch that person develop it and watch it grow. It is a different experience. It is the only kind of experience you have when you create this kind of duality out of yourself. You know that you have the capability and you impart it to somebody else, and then you see them develop the capability. How else would you experience that? You could experience your own creativity. But you have this vicarious joy of seeing somebody else accomplish something.

Since Allah (swt) places these reflections of His Own Attributes in our own self, it is a constant recreation, creating again and creating again, watching those attributes develop, watching those attributes finding their fullness. That is why we have to strive as human

beings to do the best we can to keep refining ourselves, and not just to succumb to the temptations of the *dunya* or torpor or laziness. We get a joy of refining ourselves. You draw a picture at two, and then at five, and then at twelve; and then you draw the picture at twenty-five after having lessons, and you see the progression. It can be writing or speaking or something in science, or whatever it is. This is the sharing of this incredible capability and process. This is, in a sense, *kun fa-yakun*. This is the ability to take one's will and will with that will that something be developed. It is the joy of the constant increase. This, of course, interfaces with what we are going to talk about over the weekend: *rabba* and increase and *tarbiyya*—increase in capability, increase in knowledge and increase in potentiality.

One of the greatest contributions, I think we can say that Islam has made to social philosophy as well as to religious and spiritual thought, is not just the rights and dignity of the human being but what creates those rights and that dignity—a sense of personal responsibility, a sense of personal achievement. The Prophet (sal) said he came to uplift and affirm the character or the potential character of the human beings. Another word for that character would be dignity of the human being. That is linked directly to responsibility.

Islam gives real status and dignity to human beings, and raises them higher in esteem than human beings were raised before. Before Islam, honor and dignity and rights were reserved for certain people in society: the priests or the priest caste or the wealthy and powerful people. Perhaps, it was based on birthright. Islam destroyed those differences and presented the concepts of honor and dignity in a fuller way. Of course, it would be nice if I could stand here and say that every Muslim could understand this, and that every Muslim abided by this; but it is not true, unfortunately. As we look all over the world, not just among Muslims but among other people, we see a kind of laziness that gives way to a lack of dignity and a lack of responsibility. As a result, there is a lack of education that is needed for a person to achieve or to fulfill what appears to be the Will of Allah.

We have to build a foundation for anything. If we look at life as a building, as Ahmed Kaftaro Samadhi Shaykh used to do, he would say, “We have to build this building as a strong foundation.” We can say that this foundation in Islam has existed and survived all kinds of difficulties from the time of the Prophet (sal) all the way to today—surviving extremism and fanaticism. It becomes so common to just turn on the radio, as I did coming down here listening to the BBC News, [and hear things like] another 18 people were killed in a car bomb blast in Kabul. The justification for this is terrible. The justification, which is articulated by these people, is that if you don’t believe what they say is truly Islam, then you are a *kafir* and you can be killed. It does not matter if you are a Muslim by name. If you don’t believe their brand of Islam, then you are a *kafir*.

This is so far away from anything that has to do with dignity. This is so far away from anything that has to do with responsibility, and so far away from anything that has to do with the Truth. Even though we have survived 1,431 years with this expression of the Truth, still we find that it is so corrupted in so many ways. So where does it go? It goes to personal responsibility in terms of dignity, and knowledge that surpasses and transcends political moments, or machinations of political leaders, or just crazy fanatics. We have to look at the Dīn of Islam from the point of view of the pride and the joy that comes from truly educating oneself and truly being able to manifest the very best Attributes of Allah (swt) in our lives, and hopefully in our children’s lives. It is not to grasp at the newest thing that comes along or just hold onto the oldest thing without any understanding as to what it may be. It is to be conscious, thoughtful and reflective and to ask those critical questions that we have to ask that allows a person to keep their dignity and allows the person a sense of responsibility.

Allah tells us: “**We have created man in the best of molds.**” And I think we have to assume that means potential, because we have seen that not every human being is acting out of the best of molds. If we are created out of the best of molds, the raw materials are

the best. But you could create something that is not good even with the best materials. As each one of us molds ourselves in the model of Rasūlullah (sal), as we mold ourselves out of that best material, we deserve honor and dignity as human beings because of that. Sometimes, you know, we have to understand that these are not entitlements. These are things that are earned. The excellence that we have within us has to be brought forward.

In the same way, Allah says, **“We abase them to the lowest of the low.”** So we see that is true. We have created you in the best of molds, or out of the best of materials, and then brought you to the lowest state. We are created from this very high material and brought down to this very low level, and then have to find our way back up. I explained at the beginning, there is this sense of pride or joy that one has in seeing someone excel by imparting in them knowledge, imparting to them means. So we have to climb up the mountain top, and we still have to climb 1,001 times, and climbing up sometimes means going down. It is rocky, and it is hard, and in this season it probably has ice and snow on it, but you have a vision of the summit. Along the way, things are gained and things are lost. People will suffer many things. They might suffer a broken limb or a sprained ankle, breathlessness or frost bite, many, many things but they keep climbing, because they are motivated to excel—motivated to excel.

Allah has said that this is the excellence that He has created—a sense of excellence. We are created at this very high level. The arrogance of human beings, though, is to think that just because we have a vision of the summit of the mountain, it means that we deserve to attain it. Just because we know it is there, somehow we believe, “I deserve to go there.” Somewhere inside of each one of us, we should be sure that each one of us has both a sense of honor and dignity, as well as humility, that allows us to strive and to struggle and to carry burdens. It is a very interesting balance, because human beings out of their own negligence and out of their own fears rebel against their own good nature and their own *fitrah*. We also rebel against good knowledge and good wisdom. It is like remaking the wheel.

Somebody tells you, “You should do this. It will be good for your health. You should eat yogurt. You are taking antibiotics.” “I’m lactose intolerant, so I shouldn’t eat yogurt.” “But you have to have all those guys running around in your gut. So maybe you put up with a little lactose intolerance to get those little guys running around in your gut. You have to do something...” “No, no, no.” There is the no, no syndrome. I will do it my way.

Or here is the latest book out on how to lose weight. “I’m going to do that one!” So you end up with 25 books on the shelf on how to lose weight. Or there is the latest book on how to raise a child. “Now I am an advocate of that.” Where is the history? Where is the proof? Have people been doing it wrong for the last 3,500 - 5000 years? Someone in California writes a book, “Oh. I just got a new idea! This is what we should do. Let’s label it. Let’s put a name on it. Yeah! We have to do that because we are new. We want to do the most modern thing.” Where is the history in that? Where is the proof? Where is the dignity in that? Where is the real sense of responsibility? Why do you want to use your child as an experimental laboratory? Who proved it? How do you know?

Somebody (your mother or father) says to you, “Well, you know, honey, the way we did this with you was this way.” [And the response is critical], “This is not the most modern thing in the world. We have to do the most modern thing in the world.” This life is a different kind of a laboratory, which has certain rules, regulations and guidelines. There is a path; there is a well-trodden path, *shar*. Walk it. That is what you should walk. Allah gives us these guidelines and says, “Here, raise up yourself.” But it does not mean go crazy. Even today, if you go to the most listened-to-music on XM-serious-radio, it is ‘60’s music. Why? Because it was good. It had a message. It reflected the times. Young people still like it. And now, how many times you can say a bad word makes you higher and higher on the scale of being a comedian. It is stupidity. It is like saying, “Let’s elevate stupidity.” There is no dignity in that.

There is no dignity walking around looking like a slob, being irresponsible and everyone looking the same. What does it mean? There is no dignity in this. There is no sense of responsibility. So how can Allah be proud of you? This is a condemnation. This is public humiliation and public condemnation. It doesn't matter that there might be 40 million people around the world who think it is great, who copy it. It doesn't matter. It does not matter if it is the best selling book. Somewhere on MSNBC is the latest whatever... How to Burp Your Baby in a Better Way: hold it upside down by its two top toes and burp your baby that way. Everybody then buys "The Burping Baby Book." Do you understand what I mean? This is humiliation, not humility. Allah says:

**O mankind. Surely We created you from male and female, and made you tribes and families so you may know each other. Surely, the most noble with Allah is the most righteous of you."**

Some people say that the most righteous is the one who puts their head down on the ground the most. That may not be. The most righteous person might be the most noble person, the person who takes their piety and puts it to good use, has humility and listens to the guidance of those who know, who walks the well-trodden path and takes the *tarīqah*, observance. As I spoke last night, in very great detail last night, *tarīqah* is not just path. It is observance. One observes and watches and sees and doesn't just make their life a laboratory.

Let's see where we start off. We start off where Allah has created human beings and has equally honored every human being—made us of the best of qualities, the best of materials. So we start off equal. Nobody is potentially more dignified or more honored, or due more dignity or honor than anyone else. It also tells us that there should be no discrimination between individuals except in piety, except in goodness. In that sense, that relative goodness should inspire us. It should be the basis and foundation for

building a good society and a good life. We also know how human beings bring themselves down. Almost the entire Islamic view of human creation is this endowment of the Divine on the human being for special capacity, for special knowledge, for the capability to grow, to know and to impart knowledge, to gain knowledge and to impart knowledge to others. Each of us, male or female, rich or poor, whether we are from a developed nation or an undeveloped nation, can draw from this potential. Even those people who are in physical loss or even in some mental state of loss can benefit.

Everything points to the importance of an individual and how they function and how they act and how they conduct themselves—not just as an individual but in concert in the community and in the ummah. The community means that the cooperation of other members in the community. You see mothers here at this khutbah. Some cooperation within the community had to occur [so there was childcare so they could be here]. Probably, somebody called them on the phone and asked them if they would like to go to *khutbah* today: “You are going away. Maybe you would like to attend the *khutbah* today.” Cooperation on even that small little level, when it is an inherent value and it becomes expressed in the community, this is wonderful.

Today I got a phone call from Iman. Just the instant I was going to pick up the phone and call her. “Ah, Walahi. You are in tune with me.! How are you?” So she tells me of her state. She tells me, “Well, you know I had a few transfusions this week and I have never had this reaction, but I got nauseous and I got sick to my stomach last night. And I am having atrial fibrillation.” And she said, “But it is all such a gift. It is all such a gift.” I mean without missing a beat. “It is all such a gift.” A smile on her face. She said, “You know. I just have to treat it all as a gift.” And she said, “I just love this community! Everyone is so helpful. I just love the community.” This is what she says to me. We don’t know that we could say exactly the same thing under those same circumstances, because we have not been in those circumstances. But you sure as heck would like to be able to say those things.

This is the endowment of the Divine upon the human being built into the fabric, into the very essence of what we are created of—a special capacity for knowledge. This is not information knowledge. This is not encyclopedic knowledge. This is not internet knowledge. This is real knowledge, real knowledge. This kind of knowledge says that I should schedule myself with this person in mind or that person in mind. I should use my capabilities not just for “my work” or “my ideas.” I should use it for other people. I should look around me and say, “Who knows about this subject or that subject? Who has walked this path before? I should take their advice.” Not just some stranger with a publication title somewhere who I don’t know. I should take the advice here, if it is for the children, from the teachers, from the parents who have had other children, who have walked the walk. Not just somebody new so I can be different, so I can be the first. Believe me. I have been there and done that. Some of it works. Some of it doesn’t.

Look at all the experience that we have. There is nobility and dignity in that. There is being responsible in that. So whether we are contributors or teachers or members or students or fellow students or parents or brothers and sisters, we are role models. Each one of us has to work in this communal way and serve, because it will develop an environment favorable to the intention of Allah (swt). It will create an environment where we can raise ourselves up from that lower place. The Creator, then (and I will say this in short speak) can have pride in what His Creation has done. Because there is no other way that Allah could experience that but by that separation that allows that imparting of knowledge and that knowledge then is seen to grow. Again, I am not trying to anthropomorphize “God” but just to talk about a principle.

Partly because of this concept, the human being is able to establish an infrastructure, mechanisms, systems to invite others to do good towards Allah, and towards one’s own work, and towards one’s own mission, and towards the people in the world. Through our attitudes and through our example, then we can also have that sense of knowledge and

accomplishment and we can see the goodness. That is *dawa*. That is real *dawa*. I don't think there is necessarily anything more to say than that. That is sufficient, *inshā'a-LLāh*. I am sure it relates to somebody. All the rest of you just had to sit and listen.

*Asalām aleikum*. Closing duas