

June 11, 2010

Khutbah

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: [Strive for Excellence](#)

DVD title: Good Deeds: Strive for Excellence in All that You Do

(Duas). Allah most high reveals to us in the Holy Qur'an, many times over; here are a few selections.

**And there may grow out of your community those who invite all to goodness, enjoin the doing of right, and forbid the doing of wrong. It is these who are successful. (3:104)**

Again, just a few *'āyāt* later,

**They believe in Allah and the final day and enjoin the doing of right and forbid the doing of wrong, and vie with one another in good works. It is they who are from the righteous.**

The subject today is really about good works. In Sura an Nisaa:

**Truly Allah commands you to render trust to those to whom it is due, and when you judge between people, judge justly. Truly, the most beneficial is with Allah. (4:58 )**

From the beginning of today's *khutbah*, I enjoin you and myself to be dutiful to our Creator, to obtain Allah's blessings, and to obtain Allah's mercy. We should know that Allah (swt) can grant us peace and blessings in this world, but the one who abstains from being dutiful to Allah (swt) is left without nothing other than being led astray. In humankind, there are those who lead a simple life, who become simple in the way they

conduct and manage their life, who follow everything that goes by, or is led by those people who lead them, but sometimes we have to have more than being led by leaders.

As our knowledge and achievements grow, the demands on us grow. The needs of the community also grow when [the community] become bigger. The needs of individuals vary from person to person; and it requires, at times, that we change ourselves and compete with ourselves and others in order to achieve certain goals. I don't use the word competition in a negative sense, but in the sense of striving. In all this, we need to follow a criterion. There is a criterion for humankind to fulfill human beings' needs in this world. We understand this criterion to be progressive and excellent in what we do. This is very important. How often do we hear or see voices that could critique the levels of professionalism, structures and institutions in which people act, and critique the way people conduct themselves, and everything they do in their lives? I think it is as often as we watch the news. Or it is as often as we see how lazy people are, and how much hypocrisy there is in the world.

What is very worrying are the powers of misperception and misunderstanding that are present in the world we live in today, where we are not able to distinguish anymore between what is good and what is bad; between what is excellent and active, and what is laziness; between what is evil and corrupt, and what is constructive and developmental. These characteristics exist around us every day and they seem to be increasing. It takes us to education and training in the community. It is the most important thing. We have to renew and review and reassess the way we conduct ourselves: the needs of the times, the needs of the individuals, and the needs of the community—both the children in their schooling, and ourselves in our service and our learning. [We have] to see that the way we conduct ourselves serves the parameters of excellence in the community.

Those of you who work with me in our other endeavors know that I talk about creating 'teams of excellence.' This community has to be a 'team of excellence,' and the Muslim

community has to be a ‘team of excellence.’ Indeed, the human community needs to be, and it begins with ourselves. Any decline or any mismanagement in the educational institutions from people with the reins of authority in the community will lead to negativity and backwardness, and to loss of understanding. It will weaken the individuals as well as the community. Quite often the foundation of what is assigned to be the currency of value in the community or the world weakens the community. Look, for example, to what is happening with oil today. Everything in the economy is indexed to oil, so look how the oil is destroying the earth.

At the same time, power takes over weakness. The stronger nations take over the weaker nations, and there is great suffering. We notice that the weaker productivity needs to be given precedence, because it is cheaper. If you want to go somewhere it is cheap, find some place that is less developed. You find where the people are less educated, where there is less infrastructure, and where you can exploit things. Just as a weaker currency can command more productivity and economic development in many communities and societies, it also at the same times, weakens. We have to understand how that applies to us also in our own lives and community. We should always encourage excellence and optimism among ourselves in whatever we do. It is this criterion upon which societies can succeed, and upon which we can succeed and make progress.

We do realize that less effort has been given to increase the levels of excellence in the community that should have been. We find ourselves becoming more and more minimalist, doing the least to achieve the lesser standard. We understand that this nexus is where we can have excellence in the way we produce knowledgeable children and produce successful work of individuals in the community, and where we can have more success in the way we structure and develop for the future. We can have more success spiritually also when we are in competition to better ourselves. Nothing will ultimately be beneficial until each one of us, individually and collectively, work to adopt excellence in everything we do. Nothing can be good, unless it is done with excellence.

We understand that being excellent in what we do, and excelling in what we do, will help to eliminate all kinds of problems: laziness and backwardness, ignorance and fears and doubts. Just like when you do that in a nation, it helps to end corruption on a national level. We appreciate the fact that among us there are people of specialized talents, and specialization goes hand in hand with excellence. To be a specialist means you have to be educated and take what you do seriously, and encourage others to do what they do well. When you do that, it makes people individual, in a very good sense. It means you don't follow blindly the tendencies of other people, but you add your knowledge and expertise to the general pool of knowledge and expertise.

At the same time, we are demanded to wear many hats. We have to do many things as members of this community, which is different than in the national sense where a person just does their job, and they are one portion of a larger community's capability. But we have to do many things. We have to strive for excellence in many ways, to bring our capabilities and talents to whatever we have to do. If we extend this idea to the Muslim community in general, we see that the educational systems in Muslim communities have produced a lot of worthless man and woman power, unfortunately. At the same time, we see in the global Muslim community a change and an effort (on some part) to increase knowledge, extend and be more progressive in education.

Up to now, in many of the Muslim countries, only the elite were given any education; those people who had resources, money, and who came from educated parents. But the poorest people were given nothing. That was done purposefully and intentionally in many cases, in order to have a kind of work force and quiet population; but it didn't work. It makes a restless population. Or people are studying only in the *madrasa*, and only memorizing the Qur'an. They don't understand what they are saying, and they don't know how to apply it in their day to day life. As a result of this, you have all this

potential human capability that is not being put to use. All these children and young adults, who have the potential to lift up themselves and their society, are not put to use.

We are different. We stress knowledge and education, but we have to make sure that our knowledge and education is comprehensive, that the children are receiving the best and the most excellent. It is not just by subject that the children learn, but by the enthusiasm and love that goes with it—a sense of excellence; an encouragement for excellence. If we don't do that, we are operating in contradiction to not only human capability and potential, we are actually in contradiction to Islam and the guidance of the Prophet Muhammed (sal). Any backwardness in terms of work, skill, knowledge and the ability for progression and development will undermine the foundation of Islam. He knew it at a time when most people were uneducated and had no knowledge. He, himself, was unlettered (could not read).

We see historically how this mentality had deterred growth in the Muslim community, to have an open and progressive mentality. If we are going to be a model and example for others we have to be sure that here, where we live and what we do, we have excellence. Allah (swt) said, **“You prepare yourself for all challenges (in terms of mankind) when it comes to you, with all that it takes, whether it comes in terms of power or knowledge or personal sacrifice.”** Everything is encouraged by Muslims and humankind to excel in the challenges that face us. Allah (swt) says that mankind will be tested again and again to see who is better in what they do. He also says to vie with one another in good acts and good works and good thoughts. May Allah (swt) grants us these blessings in this world and make us understand the real meaning of this. In the midst of all these problems in the world we have today, amidst the deficiencies and lack of capability because of lack education and knowledge, we find ourselves in a situation where others have excelled better than we have.

We have come to forget in whatever has been produced of excellence and perfection, the struggling to compete with ourselves and one another in doing good has become minimized. This is true throughout the world, and also in the Muslim world. We forget that the difference between the capability and the possibilities that we see in the Western world and in the Eastern world, or between the developed world and undeveloped world lies only in a materialistic mentality supported by a strong educational system. When I say education, I mean academic education, moral education, ethical education, family education, as well as the foundation of spiritual education. We don't want to be saying, "Oh, well, we had a great idea 30 years ago," and watch it go down, down, down, because the people in the community, like the people in the nation, are not accessing their full capabilities, knowledge and excellence. We are not too old to teach. We are not too old to guide. We are not too old to create. We have not been at it so long that we are tired.

Every child is a new challenge. Every individual, every circumstance is a new challenge. Everything before us is an opportunity to deepen our *iman*. If we don't believe it, we don't belong. We get so wrapped up in ourselves that we forget. But do you forget that your future is linked inexorably to the other futures of everyone else? We don't want to be like people in the world who live in shanties and shacks, who see on television what other people have, but they have nothing. They have sewage running in the streets. They have no clothes for their children for school, and no books to read. We don't want to be like that. "O Shaykh, we could never be like that!" Well, there was a time when they thought they could never be like that, too. We are given the opportunity to be leaders, not followers.

***There was a time when the Prophet Mohammed (sal) saw a funeral and followed it to the graveyard. He (sal) asked, "Can you make a special location next to that grave?" And the man said, "What's the point? It doesn't make any difference." He felt it didn't make any difference where the man was buried.***

***And the Prophet (sal) reminded the man that Allah (swt) has recommended that whatever we do, we should be good at it, and instructed him to make a very nice grave over there.***

Don't just dig a hole and place the person in it. His physical life may be over, but respect for that life never ends. What's the message behind this? If you allocate a special place in the graveyard for someone, you are being good and kind and merciful, and considering the person buried in the grave. If in terms of conduct what is required of us is to be good to the dead person, then what about the rest of our lives? What about the day to day examples of our lives? How should we be to each other? How should we be to everyone? Indeed, Allah (swt) wants us, first, to be perfect and excellent in what we do; secondly, the kind of excellence we do has to be concerned not only with the materialistic world, but also with the Hereafter; thirdly, as Muslims we should always strive to do what Allah (swt) wants us to do.

It is well known that if a person takes on some responsibility, it is a shame that he doesn't do it with excellence and perfection. If you are teaching piano, giving advice, teaching in the school, planting a garden, or changing a light bulb, do it with excellence; otherwise, you are wrapped up in your own self, your own home, your own life, your own garden, your own thing—and it's really not right. It borders on being *haram*. It's not good. The Prophet Mohammed (sal) encourages us that whatever we do, we should do with excellence. The Prophet (sal) said that if we sacrifice an animal, be good to that animal; speak kindly to that animal so you minimize the harm and suffering inflicted on the animal. He who reads Qur'an is the best, and the best person to recite Qur'an in the prayer. The Prophet (sal) tells us the story that when an announcement came that one should perform the call to prayer, Bilal was chosen because he had the best tone and voice. What was he looking for? Excellence. It was not a political decision. "I'll have so and so call the prayer, and then they will be a partisan to me."

Islam encourages excellence, and it should be emulated throughout all our educational systems. To emulate Islam doesn't mean just to teach the history of Islam, though we should all know that. We should be Islamic and spiritual in the way we talk, and be kind, striving for excellence and goodness in the way we teach. Whether we are teaching something vocational or academic, it doesn't matter. If you are teaching someone how to repair a piece of furniture in the woodshop or repair stairs on the weekend, it should be done with excellence—not sloppy. Leave no nails bent, but leave them flush. Leave no painting ugly. Don't stain the building wrong. Don't string the wire low. Don't make the pathway with rough spots on it. Excellence, excellence, excellence. It's not too late even for our older children to be taught this again and again. It is not just so you are competitive in the world of business, but it means people can trust you.

Allah (swt) showers mercy on us, *inshā'a-Llāh*, because He encourages us to excellence. In Qur'an, He tells us the simplest thing: **“Is the reward of goodness anything other than goodness?”** (55:60) Is the reward of excellence anything other than excellence? No. So we ask Allah (swt) to shower His Mercy and Blessings, and remind us all that it is our responsibility to pray to Him, and remind us that the one who prays one prayer, Allah gives him ten times the reward of that prayer. We pray to Allah (swt) to be pleased with the rightly guided *khalifas* of the Prophet (sal), upon the Companions of the Prophet, and those who follow him in truthfulness and righteousness, *inshā'a-Llāh*. (Duas).

SECOND KHUTBAH (Duas) Ask yourself in everything you do, “Could I do it a little better?” Washing the car, planting the garden, being on time for the *khutbah*. Just ask yourselves, boys and girls, ladies and gentlemen, “Could I do it just a little better, just a little better, more excellently?” I ask you to please take that very, very, very, very, very seriously—not as a joke. I pray to Allah to guide all the leaders of the Muslims and leaders of our country, and to people who give good advice; remove the stress from those who are distressed, and remove the debt from those who are in debt, and remove the

illness from those who are ill. We ask Allah (swt) to give us good in this world and in the Hereafter, and save us from the torment of the fire. (Duas)