

KHUTBAH OUTLINE

The Role and Responsibility of Individuals and Community in the American Political Process

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

1. Individuals are valuable and can make a difference:
 - a. Human beings are a special creation of Allah. Allah has honored them. Every individual human being is valuable. Because Allah created all of them and He created in the best mold and shape:
 - i. We have indeed created man in the best of moulds. (Al-Tin 95:4).
 - b. And Allah made this human being not just an ordinary creation but chosen this human as His deputy and His vicegerent on this earth:
 - i. Behold, your Lord said to the angels: "I will create a deputy on earth." (Al-Baqarah 2:30)
 - c. Thus, every individual (free, adult and sane) is responsible. He/she is responsible to serve Allah ('ibadah), do the obligatory duties (fara'id) and avoid the forbidden things (muharramat) and communicate Allah's message to others (da'wah).
 - d. Every individual is responsible for himself/herself.
 - i. The Prophet –peace be upon him- said: Abdullah ibn 'Umar –may Allah be pleased with him- said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah –peace be upon him- say, 'You are all custodians, and you all will be questioned about the things under your custody. You are all custodians and you all shall be questioned about your custody. (Al- Bukhari, Hadith no. 844)
 - e. Just we are custodians of our families; we are also responsible for the affairs of our city, our state, our country and our world.
 - f. Just as every brick in a house is valuable, so is every member valuable and every person capable of making a difference.

- i. A well known anthropologist Margaret Mead said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”
- ii. The noted civil rights activist Jesse Jackson said, “An organized minority is a political majority.”

2. Should Muslims participate in the American electoral process?

- a. During the 1996 election the raging debate in the Muslim community was is voting halal or haram?
- b. Today that matter is settled. However, although record numbers of American Muslims are voting in each election cycle, there still remain doubts, cynicism, and certainly the fact that the American Muslim community is NOT realizing its full potential in terms of its own political empowerment.
- c. The consensus opinion among scholars is that participation in the political process is an obligation. It means that we have to participate, not just choose to participate.
- d. Thus, it becomes an individual responsibility not just a collective responsibility.
- e. Regardless of whether you are a citizen or not you all have the right to participate, although only citizens can vote. But political participation is more than voting.
- f. We need to mobilize the community. We need to educate each other. We need to contribute to political campaigns. We need to volunteer. We need to even seek public office.

3. Why is it a Muslim obligation to participate and shape American politics?

- a. All of humankind is one family.
- b. Islam is a global religion, not restricted to any one ethnic group or geographical area.
- c. The Muslims are expected to be benevolent people and have the responsibility of bearing witness for the entire humanity. The principle of “righteousness and equity” mentioned in the Holy Quran, is the greatest general principle by which to measure the relationship between Muslims and others. All other matters should concede to this principle.

- d. The nature of contemporary international realities, which are characterized by both the interrelation and transcendence of borders, should be taken into serious consideration.
 - e. Current international legal instruments and domestic laws, which address human rights and civil rights, should be embraced. The principles of justice included in such documents should be followed as they are in harmony with the sermon of the Messenger to his followers at his Farewell Pilgrimage.
4. But the American political process has not yielded benefits to Muslims.
- a. The complaint is legit but the answer is not to withdraw but seek newer and better methods to engage.
 - b. Despite the hurt that the Muslim community feels and the scorns they bear they need to look beyond their immediate discomfort to what serves America and the world best.
 - c. The American Muslim community needs to transcend their disappointments and look to the future and take into account the seriousness of the issues at stake in this election: the rule of law, war and peace, economic justice, education and health care.
 - d. Realize we are in a catch-22 situation.
 - i. On one hand some of us argue that we cannot support any candidate because neither of them reflects our views. On the other the reality is that if we do not engage in the process then no candidate will ever reflect our issues.
 - ii. So what do we do, wait for our favorite candidate to magically emerge? No. The only way to break this cycle of cynicism is to become full participants in the political process.
 - iii. If we desire change, then we must listen to what Allah (SWT) Ar-raad 13:11 – "Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves (within their own souls)."
 - iv. In Surah Baqarah verse 143 Allah (SWT) addresses us, "Thus we have made you an Ummah justly balanced that ye might be witness over mankind and the Apostle a witness over yourselves."

- v. It is in this context that we have to engage in the political process for the future of our community, our nation, and our world can be made better off if we shed our lethargy and cynicism to implement the Quranic view so well articulated by Gandhi when he said we must be the change that we wish to see in others.
 - vi. If you want politics to be value based, then bring your values to the table and engage in the process of change.
 - e. Allah (SWT) says in Surah Tawbah 9 Ayat 105, “And say: Work; so Allah will see your work and (so will) His Messenger and the believers; and you shall be brought back to the Knower of the unseen and the seen, then He will inform you of what you did.”
 - f. There is no need for us to either despair or complain. We need to just keep doing our duty.
5. Islam offers a democratic ethic.
- a. The principle of shura, or consultative decision-making, is the source of democratic ethics in Islam.
 - b. In establishing the Charter of Medina, Prophet Muhammad demonstrated a commitment to a constitutional governance system and a spirit of federalism based on universal human rights, not unlike the American Bill of Rights.
 - c. Umar (RA) had opined that it is the duty of the common citizen to keep his power in check. He said where I do right support me, and when I do wrong stop me.
 - i. John Gardner, Former Secretary of Health, 1965 and Founder of “Common Cause” made a similar observation that can also inspire us. He said. “The citizen can bring our political and governmental institutions back to life, make them responsive and accountable, and keep them honest. No one else can.”
6. A concluding advice.
- a. Listen to what advice Ali (RA) gave to Malik Ibn Ashtar as he was being dispatched as the governor of Egypt, “Know, O Malik, that I am sending you to a country which has been subjected before you to both just and unjust rulers, and so the people will judge you in the same way that you now stand in judgment of

your predecessors. Therefore, let good works be your true assets. Discipline yourself, and covet not that which is not rightfully yours. Train your heart to feel compassion for the people, to love them and be kind to them. Do not behave like a ferocious beast toward them, snatching away their sustenance, for the people are of two categories: they are your brothers in religion and/or your fellow human beings.”

- b. Thus a Muslim works to benefit all of Allah’s creation for our beloved Prophet was a sent as mercy to all of Allah’s creation.
- c. The time has come for American Muslims to demonstrably show that they can make the necessary contributions to return American politics to be once again get rooted in the universal values of peace, liberty and justice for all.
- d. It is time for the Muslim community to join the growing legions of fellow Americans who are inspired by hope and powered by a sense of optimism that things can and do change.
- e. Change does not come from just wishing for it. The way forward is clearly indicated in the Quran, "God does not change the condition of a people unless they change that which is within themselves."