

MIFTAAH SEMINAR

TOWARD SACRED ACTIVISM



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SESSION 1

What is Justice?

- Injustice is when one thing is put in other than its proper place.
- In our books of shariah we have the term **عَدْل** which means justice.
 - It gives us the understanding of balance.
 - Justice is when everything is put in its proper place.
 - We understand that Allah SWT is the Most Just because He has placed everything in its rightful place.
 - One of Allah's names is **العَدْل** meaning He is the Most Just.
- Another one of Allah's names is **الحَق** which means The Right.
 - Allah SWT is the One who is the bestower of all human rights.
 - There is a difference between human rights and civil rights.
 - Human rights transcend time and space.
 - They transcend any man made boundaries which can change over time.
 - They were given by Allah SWT.
 - Civil Rights relate to people who are citizens within a modern, legal state.
 - A government can recognize something has a civil right when it is not a God given human right and they may not recognize something as a civil right when it is a God given human right.

- Just because something is legal, it does not mean it is moral.
- Civil legality does not equal Islamic morality.
- There are also non Shar'i laws and rules that can help to ensure justice for the common good but do not come directly from rulings of sacred law.
- They can be supported by sacred law.
- One example of this is the speed limits which have been put in place.
 - Speed limits are there to protect human life and to protect other people's property.
 - Both of these objectives are found in sacred law as well.
- Sacred law should be our guide book to how we understand justice no matter where we are.
- It is important that we are able to differentiate between truth and feelings.
- Just because someone feels a certain way, it does not mean that this is the truth.
- As Muslims, we believe that certain things are objective truth.
 - One example of this is the Quran.

Obligation for Social Justice Activism

- The term social justice was pioneered in the 19th century.
 - It was created by the Catholic Church and originally had a religious connotation to it.
 - This was then changed and it became known as a secular liberal ideology.
 - People can now say that they have no religion but they claim to be advocates for social justice.
 - Some of the things that they argue for might be good while others might be blameworthy.

- Sacredness of something might be reliant upon the way that people feel and not necessarily whether that thing is actually sacred.
 - As Muslims, our idea of sacred activism is much different.
- When something is sacred, it is because Allah SWT has made it sacred and we have seen it in the Quran and Sunnah.
- Sacredness is not dependant on feelings.
- Our framework for this is "enjoining good and forbidding evil"
 - Anything which Allah SWT and the Prophet SAW hated can never be considered as good for us.
 - Enjoining good and forbidding evil are individual and communal responsibilities.
- Not everyone has the communal responsibility to work for an activist organization.
- However, everyone has the individual responsibility to at least support those organizations whether it be through moral support or monetary support.
- In terms of individual obligation to enjoin good and forbid evil, everyone must do this when it comes to their homes and their surroundings.
 - The Prophet SAW said: If any of you see something evil, change it with your hand.
 - This means if you have the authority to change something, then you must do so.
 - It does not refer to physically harming others.
 - He SAW continued: If you are unable to change it with your hand, then resist it with your tongue. If you can not do that, then resist it in your heart and that is the weakest of faith.

- In terms of communal obligation, Muslims must be organized.
- Allah SWT said:

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿3:104﴾

(3:104) And from among you there must be a party who invite people to all that is good and enjoin the doing of all that is right and forbid the doing of all that is wrong. It is they who will attain true success.

- Allah SWT is commanding the community to fulfill these three things in order to be successful.
- If a Muslims community is not successful, we must look back to these commands and assess if they are being fulfilled.
- What are the societal consequences of forgoing enjoining good and forbidding evil?
 - Anytime a communal obligation is not fulfilled, this constitutes a communal sin.
 - Allah SWT will lift some of His divine mercy from the group which does not fulfill this command.
 - If there is a group which is organized and is fulfilling this command, then it will protect the entire community.
 - If Muslims are not open about enjoining good and forbidding evil, this passively aids the normalization of injustice and immorality.
 - If we do not show that we are displeased with the evil in society, then this will normalize the injustice in society.
- Success is achieved when we hold on to our values, work towards them, and leave the rest to Allah SWT.
- When we look at the success of Muslims in different civilizations, we see that they were successful because they held onto the three commands mentioned in the verse.

Prerequisites for Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil

- In any endeavor, the most important element is one's intention.
 - The goal must always be to please Allah SWT.
 - The Prophet SAW said: Verily actions are by their intentions.
 - If we are sincerely doing something to please Allah SWT, then we must do it while conforming with the Quran and Sunnah whether people agree with it or not.
 - There is no way to please everyone, but we should also never intentionally offend anyone.
 - As long as it pleases Allah SWT then we know we are doing the right thing.
- We must display moral courage.
 - The Prophets were never popular, but they continued to spread their message.
 - The Prophet SAW said: A believer to another believer is like a block in a building. One of them strengthens the other.
 - We should surround ourselves with those who are courageous and have strong Iman so that we benefit from them.
 - If we surround ourselves with those who are weak in Iman and those who compromise in their faith, this will weaken the community and we will begin to compromise our faith as well.
 - The more that we stand with people during the day in activism, the more that we should stand at night in prayer in front of Allah SWT.
 - This way we do not lose our motivation.

- In order to enjoin good and forbid evil, we must know and understand the rulings for specific issues.
 - If any Muslim is going to advocate for a specific issue, that person should strive to become scholarly in that issue.
 - They should know the proofs in the Quran for and against it and they should have teachers that they can go back to.

Etiquettes for Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil

- Etiquettes, or adab, means to give everything and everyone its proper due at its proper place and time.
 - Having adab is a sign of emotional intelligence.
 - The companions would advise others to teach their youth adab before they teach them sacred knowledge.
- As Muslims, the way that we seek an objective is important.
 - We may have a goal which conforms to the Quran and Sunnah but we can do harm to our cause if we use the improper means (bad etiquettes) to get to that objective.
- Allah mentions how we should deal with individuals who have a difference of opinion:

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿7:199﴾

(7:199) [O Prophet!] Show forgiveness, enjoin equity, and avoid the ignorant.

- One must hold themselves accountable to proper objectives.
- One must incline towards pardoning the person.
 - We should always assume good of other people.
- If they become hostile with us, then we avoid the ignorant.
 - Umar RA stated: Do not argue with an ignorant person or you will be defeated by their ignorance.

- It is possible for a person to argue for a good cause and accumulate sins by arguing for it in the wrong way.

Allyship vs Coalition

- There is a difference between allies and coalition partners.
 - Allyship is based upon people coming together and having the same values and ethics.
 - They have the same start point and the same objective.
 - Those in a coalition can have different motives while having the same end goal.
 - Allah SWT describes Muslims as allies for one another:

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿9:71﴾

[9:71] The believers, both men and women, are allies of one another. They enjoin good, forbid evil, establish Prayer, pay Zakah, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Surely Allah will show mercy to them. Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.

- Believers are brought together through iman along with these 5 actions mentioned:
 - Enjoin good
 - Forbid evil
 - Establish prayer
 - Pay zakat
 - Obey Allah and the Prophet SAW
- One example of a coalition during the time of the Prophet SAW was Hilf ul Fudool.
 - This was a pact made between the non-Muslims that they would not cheat anyone in business transactions.

- The Prophet SAW agreed with the disbelievers because they were standing up for those who were vulnerable.
 - He SAW joined with them although they had different beliefs because they were fighting for the same cause and goal.
 - This did not mean that he SAW agreed with their shirk or their other beliefs.
- Another example of a coalition was the treaty of Hudaibiyah.
- As they began writing the treaty, the Muslims wrote Bismillah at the top of the treaty and Suhail bin 'Amr asked them to remove it because they did not believe in it.
- The Muslims also wrote "from Muhammad the Messenger of Allah" on the treaty. Suhail bin 'Amr then said that if they believed that he was the messenger of Allah they would not have fought against him. Then the Prophet SAW told Ali RA to write "from Muhammad bin Abdullah" instead.
- In these changes, the Prophet SAW did not do anything against the beliefs of Islam.
 - He SAW replaced truthful words with other words that were equally truthful.
 - Just because we agree on certain issues with other people it does not mean that we have to compromise our beliefs for them.