

MA'RUF IS THE BASIS FOR SUSTAINING INTER-PERSONAL RELATIONS

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It is customary for us to open the Jumuah Khutbah with the reminder of Taqwa, to be consciously aware about the pleasure and displeasure of Almighty Allah (SWT). Consistent with this, we remember Taqwa in our relationships, which rules over the relationships with our loved ones.

Unfortunately, a great lack of Taqwa, and fear of Almighty Allah (SWT), is evident when it comes to this important aspect of our life ie. relationships. Therefore, domestic violence or gender-based violence is one of the most serious challenges which our society is facing, on an unimaginable scale.

Last week we started a discussion about this topic of gender-based violence. Many times, we see that Islam is blamed for this problem. Islamic text and scriptures are exploited and manipulated to justify this crime.

ISLAM HAS 3 APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Last week we gave a synopsis of this problem by saying that the approach of Islam to this problem is based upon 3 main approaches. This is evident from the Quran, Hadith from Rasulullah (SAWA) and the Ahlul Bait (a.s). The 3 main approaches are:

1. Holistic approach ie. analysing the whole scenario in society and not restrict it to one particular problem.
2. A deep-rooted approach which does not focus on the symptoms, but rather focusses on the root causes.
3. A multi-faceted approach towards this whole problem, reviewing through the different phases and levels of the problem and addressing it there accordingly.

I then mentioned that there are 3 main principles where Islam expands on these 3 approaches.

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Firstly, the non-gender approach. When the Holy Quran tries to explain that the only criterion for us is being Insaan (human beings), and gender is secondary. This is similar to our daily clothes, where our personality does not change even though we change our clothes every day. Gender has no role in determining priority. Our sense of humanity is important. Therefore, the Holy Quran addresses us as "hudan linnaas" ie. humanity is the subject of the Quran, and humanity itself transcends gender.

This is a crucial point to digest, because the Holy Quran guides us in our relationships based upon this understanding. We reflect on this in the meaning of the beginning of verse 70 of Surah Israa (chapter 17 of the Holy Quran), where Almighty Allah (SWT) honours us on the basis of our humanity:

And surely We have honored the children of Adam

Another verse worth reflecting on in this regard is verse 4 of Surah Tin (chapter 95 of the Holy Quran), where Almighty Allah (SWT) says regarding our creation as humanity in the most beautiful manner:

We have indeed created man in the best of moulds

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This is Insaan (humanity) and therefore, the relationship between opposite genders is based upon this principle of humanity.

ISLAM'S POSITION IS ANTI-FEMINIST

The second point which is crucial to understand is that our substance as humanity does not stop us from understanding the different roles and responsibilities of the 2 genders. These differences in role profile between men and women do not make the one inferior and the other superior. Not at all! However, to deny these differences is also highly problematic.

Quite honestly, Islam does not agree with the feminist approach, whose fundamental principles are based upon the denial of different roles between men and women. Beyond any doubt, Islam acknowledges the different roles and responsibilities between men and women. However, let it be clear, that this difference does not amount to discrimination and cannot be used as the basis for abuse. Furthermore, this difference does not justify a patriarchal approach on others.

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This is the problem, where the difference in roles and responsibilities between men and women has been understood by people in different societies as a licence for abuse, control and exploitation. Islam and the Holy Quran vehemently disagree with this notion.

This was what we established in last week's lecture. Therefore, the Holy Quran addresses the institution of family and the relationships of the family as a crucial matter.

MA'RUF ESTABLISHES JUST RELATIONS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

The Holy Quran describes family relationships with a single word, namely "Ma'ruf", in explaining what the secret and the key in family relationships are.

In the Holy Quran, we see that this word "Ma'ruf" has been used multiple times. This word "Ma'ruf" has been used more than 50% of the time to prescribe family relationships. We see this in verse 19 of Surah Nisaa (chapter 4 of the Holy Quran), where Almighty Allah (SWT) says:

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“Live with them on a footing of kindness and equity.”

This is the headline, where we are supposed to interact and socialise with them based upon “Ma’ruf” (goodness).

In an excerpt from verse 228 of Surah Baqarah (chapter 2 of the Holy Quran), Almighty Allah (SWT) explains the position of men and women, and their rights:

“And they (women) have rights similar to those against them in a just manner.”

This verse explains that women have rights over men and vice versa. However, when the Quran speaks about the rights of women on men in this verse, it emphasises “bil Ma’ruf” ie. with goodness. Otherwise, the sentence is complete without this emphasis too.

Commentators of the Holy Quran have gone to great lengths in explaining why this condition of “bil Ma’ruf” has been added. However, if you analyse the whole picture, you will see that the

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Quran repeatedly reminds men that “bil Ma’ruf” (with goodness and kindness) is the criteria in our interaction and treatment of women.

In the subsequent verse 229 of Surah Baqarah, reference is also made to treating women with kindness during a dispute even if it means you can no longer live together.

“Then (a woman) must be retained in honour or released in kindness.”

Again, we see that the basis and foundation of relationships is “bil Ma’ruf” (with goodness), and the Quran emphasises that this applies equally in the case of divorce or in establishing a marriage.

It is not permissible to deviate from these borders of Ma’ruf. The literal meaning of Ma’ruf means “known”. The opposite of this is “unknown”. However, in the Holy Quran, the word Ma’ruf does not only refer to known and unknown. We know this from the reference in verse 110 of Surah aal-Imraan, where Almighty Allah (SWT) speaks about joining good and forbidding evil:

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“Enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong.”

Ma'ruf refers to comprehensive goodness!

PRACTICAL DIMENSIONS TO MA'RUF WHICH MAKES ISLAM TRULY REMARKABLE

Some people have very interestingly noted that the reason for relationships between men and women being referred to as “bil Ma'ruf” in the Holy Quran is due to the relationship needing to be based upon good values and the normal practice in society. For example, polygamy can be viewed as against Ma'ruf in a society where it is not the norm. If polygamy is seen as abuse in such a society, then it can be viewed as against this general instruction of the Quran which requires us to treat our women with Ma'ruf.

Another example is in the case of Nafaqah (maintenance), which the Holy Quran in principle, establishes as the responsibility of men. What is the definition of Nafaqah? The Holy Quran explains that we should maintain them according to the norms of that society (nafaqah bil ma'ruf).

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Nafaqah is interpreted according to the norms of society as clothing, food and a house. However, the complexity arises in what clothing means? Is it cheap clothing or expensive clothing? The same issue arises in food and a house! To demystify this, Ma'ruf should be based upon the norms of that society and the social status of that particular woman. This is the criteria for which they should be provided for, in the case of Nafaqah.

So, the social status of the woman should be maintained. Therefore, our religious scholars and jurists emphasise this in the practical application of Ma'ruf. Support for living and domestic help would also then be included if that is her social norm that she is accustomed to. In exchange, there is nothing that a woman owes the provider ie. the man!

Yes, the Holy Quran does say that men have a level over women. But is this an authority for men to abuse women? Is it a hand that men have to exploit women? Not at all! This level over women refers to responsibility that men have towards them. On this point, I want to revert to the point I have continuously emphasised, ie. the difference in role between men and women. The different role that men are responsible for does not make them superior to women.

This is a very big misunderstanding!

COMING UP IN THE NEXT LECTURE...

In the next Jumuah, we will unpack the multi-faceted approach and how it is applied in practice. The 3 principle positions which Islam establishes are mutual respect, mutual understanding and mutual rights.

We reflect on those verses of the Holy Quran and historical narrations of Hadith, but then there is also the exemplary Treatise of Rights from Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s), where he reminds us that the wife is one of the greatest favours of Almighty Allah (SWT), for which we must be thankful to Him (SWT).

Once we have understood this in the next Jumuah, we will then also reflect on the issues which are the source of violence and abuse, in the various degrees. Today, we speak about physical, emotional and other types of abuse. In fact, the Holy Quran addresses this all at different levels, realising that this is the unfortunate reality of society.

SECOND KHUTBAH

IMAM MUHAMMAD JAWAD (A.S): THE YOUNGEST IMAM OF AHLUL BAIT (A.S)

29 Dhul Qa'ada is the martyrdom of the 9th Imam of Ahlul Bait (a.s), Imam Muhammad Jawad (a.s). Imam Jawad was the youngest Imam of the Ahlul Bait (a.s) and lived for only 25 years, before he was martyred through poisoning by the Abbasids.

In this short period of his life, Imam Muhammad Jawad (a.s) stood against deviation and the misinterpretation of the Holy Quran which we have discussed. Furthermore, he also stood firmly against the exploitation of Islamic text and scriptures which was used to justify the evil of his time.

Imam Muhammad Jawad (a.s) defended the pure and pristine Islam, against all these deviations, and was steadfast in his opposition to the oppressive regime and system. They could not tolerate him any longer and had him killed.

Imam Muhammad Jawad (a.s) is buried in Kadhimain, Baghdad, alongside his grandfather, Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s), the 7th Imam of Ahlul Bait (a.s).

THE CATASTROPHE OF YEMEN ESCALATES AGAINST THE SILENCE OF THE WORLD

Another very sad and tragic news comes from Yemen once again, where the jets of the Saudi and Emirati alliance attacked a school bus, killing more than 40 innocent, defenceless children, together with injuring more than 65 others. These are schoolchildren! What makes this more despicable is that they very proudly justified this heinous crime by saying that it was a legitimate target. For them, it was correct to kill these children!

We have seen the scale of destruction over the past 4 years of war in Yemen, where thousands of innocent civilians have been killed and basic infrastructure destroyed. Despite this, the world remains silent, not ready to say a word, let alone come to the rescue of these poor people in Yemen.

Saudi and Emirati alliance have used every trick in the book to push these poor people of Yemen to surrender, but Alhamdu Lillah, these oppressed people of Yemen remain resilient in resisting the oppression.

Last week we also saw in Afghanistan, that these evils bombed a mosque while it was packed with congregants for Jumuah prayers, killing a large number which included some prominent Ulama.

This is the precarious position which the Ummah (Muslim nation) finds itself in today.

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN FACES A FRESH TEST WITH BASELESS SANCTIONS

On a separate note, we have all seen in the news how sanctions have been imposed against the Islamic Republic of Iran, with no justification, especially since Iran has fulfilled its commitments to date.

These are all attempts to suffocate this nation, who resist against the imperialist agenda. This tactic from the enemies has repeatedly failed miserably, and Insha Allah we will once again see these sanctions not bring this nation to its knees. What we see today, is that this Iranian nation is the only real hope to the oppressed people across the world, and this will not be destroyed by a lunatic like Trump.

Finally, this fire will burn the Zionist regime, which is the source of all the problems in the region.

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We pray to Almighty Allah (SWT) to grant this Iranian nation greater strength and perseverance, and the resolve and spirit of resistance against the hegemony of the Western powers and USA in particular.