

Friday Sermon as a Channel to Resolve the Ethical Issues in Contemporary Muslim Societies

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Abstract

Present day Muslim societies are plagued by numerous moral problems. These problems can be addressed in different ways. One of the main means is the Friday Sermon (*Khutba al-Jumu'ah*). This article studies the Friday Sermon as a channel to solve the ethical issues in the contemporary Muslim societies. It shows that Friday sermon is an important media outlet in which speakers can preach Islamic teachings that have utmost importance to Muslims in their daily lives. Through this channel preachers can spread positive values, and direct Muslims towards the required high morals and excellent manners. If adopted in the spirit of Islam, it can be very helpful in solving the ethical issues of modern-day Muslim societies.

Key Words: Ethical Issues, Muslim societies, Friday sermon, solution

Introduction

Sermons are as old as human history. The first sermon is called when Allah has addressed to the angels before the creation of Adam.¹ All the religions have a special mode for Sermons. In Islam sermons have been used as a tool for the education and guidance of the Muslims in the Prophetic period as well as in the period of Rightly Guided Caliphs (*Al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn*). From Islamic perspective, sermon (*Khutbah*) is a word used to define a speech that incorporates gratitude to Allah, praising

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¹ See: Al-Baqarah 2: 30.

Him, praying on the Prophet, calling Allah for the Muslims and preaching and reminding.²

Kinds of Sermons

In every religion there are different kinds of sermons which are being used according to the needs of the public and society. Similarly in Islam there are also different kinds of sermons like Topical Sermons, Character Study, Expository sermons, Occasional sermons. Topical Sermon gives information on a specific topic. In this type Imam or *Khatīb* addresses on a current event keeping in view the solution of the current problem in the light of Islamic Teachings, it could be an address on a social or common problem or any topic of interest.³ Character Study sermons give an insight into the lives of great personalities of Islam and their characters to encourage the Muslims and enlightening them with lives of these great men and women of Islam and to seek guidance how they handled different issues of life.⁴ In Expository sermon *Khatīb* selects a text from the holy book and dictate the sermon's outline. *Khatīb* is allowed to speak uninterrupted. He explained the text with help of examples and holy doctrines. Occasional sermons are the sermons that are delivered on *ʿĪdain, Nikāh, Hajj* and on other special occasions. Sermons lay a great importance as they not only provide an opportunity to all the Muslims to gather at a place but also unite them to meet the challenges of the day.

Friday Sermon

Friday sermon (*Khutba al-Jumu'ah*) is a weekly periodic meeting in which a *Khatīb* (the person who delivers the sermon) conveys Islamic teachings to the audience. It is one of the most important means of mass communication, as it specializes in features not available in any other media platform. It represents a ritual of Islam, and takes place in a solemn

² 'Alā al-Dīn al-Kāsānī, *Badā' al-Sanā' fi Tartīb al-Sharā'* (Beirut :Dār al-Kitāb al-Arabī, 1982), 262.

³ John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*(New Zealand: titus publisher,2014),49.

⁴ Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*,49.

atmosphere in which souls prepare to receive and listen. Friday sermons can work for the betterment of mankind, they not only guide the Muslims how to pray, observe fast and perform Hajj but also taught them how to treat neighbors, relatives and co-workers. What is wrong and what is right? What are the duties and rights of an individual? In other words it can be said that Friday sermons provide all the information required to live and survive to all the individuals about their religion. Friday sermon is a special blessing for Muslims. It has a special religious significance. It is said that when Imam comes out for *Jumu'ah* prayer angels fold their papers and listen to the *Khutba*.⁵

These Friday sermons work as a platform in which a large number of people are gathered and they not only have the opportunity to discuss the social problems but also find the solution of their problems. Friday sermons bring the positive change in society. They change the negative behavior of the individuals. That's why Holy Prophet (ﷺ) stressed to listen the Friday sermon carefully and attentively and ordered not to talk to each other.⁶ It is obligatory to the individuals to attend this sermon and make this advice as a part of their lives.

Sermon to teach ethical values

Friday sermon preach the true essence of Islam and give great understanding of Islamic ideology and as a complete code of life which makes it a religion of common welfare, safety, coherence, peace, love, dialogue, tolerance and peaceful co-existence. Our beloved Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said on the day of conquest of Makkah to his enemies: "Go (Oh disbelievers) you are free." Irrespective of the fact that these enemies of Islam have persecuted, punished and harmed him very badly. It is the greatest virtue of Islam that the Prophet taught his followers through these sermons and by making himself a paragon of nobility and

⁵ Muhammad Ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 1416AH), Ḥadīth: 929.

⁶Sulaymān Ibn al-Ash'ath , Sunan Abī Dāwūd ((Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 1430AH), Ḥadīth: 1112.

piety. People from all the fields of life have learned to live peacefully by following this Qur'ānic Verse:

"يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ، وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ"⁷

" O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable among you to Allah is that believer who has the fearfulness of Allah. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing and All-Aware."

Ethical Issues in Contemporary Muslim Societies

Moral decline is worsening day by day in Muslim societies. Racism, fornication, adultery, drinking, gambling, intolerance, homosexuality, extremism are the major moral issues Muslim world is facing now a days. Friday sermons are the significant mean to address and eradicate these moral evils.

Racism

Racism is social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic, and political needs of a society at a given period of time.⁸ This evil not only affected the individual but effect the whole community and whole society. It is through the Friday sermons that such critical issues can be addressed in a very effective manner. Friday sermons should focus on these critical issues by addressing the Muslims. The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) himself addressed the same and preached that no one is superior to other on the basis of race color caste and creed. Following his great example Muslim *Khatib* can play a pivotal role in eliminating the racial issues by preaching Islam's glorious teachings regarding equality of all human beings as we find in the last sermon of the Holy prophet in his last *Hajj*. He announced: O People, your Lord is one;

⁷ Surah Al-Hujrat49:13.

⁸ Albert Memmi, *Le Racism* (France: Gallimard, 1982) , 25.

you are the progeny of the same father (who was created from dust). Hence it is not permissible for you to make any discrimination between high and low. Neither an Arab has superiority over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab. A white person is not superior to a black person, nor is a black superior to a white. The most honorable among you in the sight of God is the one who is the most righteous.

Fornication and adultery

Fornication and adultery known as "*Zinā*" in Arabic, is defined as "sexual immorality."⁹ It is a major sin and hence strictly prohibited. It not only invites wrath of Almighty Allah but also deteriorate social relations. A large number of Muslims are indulging in fornication and adultery and it has been creating negative impact on contemporary Muslim societies. A person who indulges in fornication suffers from anxiety and depression and causes lot of problems for the society. That's why Islam ordered to stay away from adultery.¹⁰ Friday sermon is a great channel to address such issues to cope with moral corruption. In order to resolve such immoral practices in a society these kinds of evils should be a main focus of sermons of today.

Drinking and gambling

Drinking and gambling are the most important factors of immortality. A research in the USA showed that the rate of narcotics' abuse had been reached the highest point in 70s, decreased in 80s, and increased again in 90s, but remained constant till now.¹¹ Because of such kind of adverse effects of drinking, and gambling, drugs Islam prohibited the use of drinking and to indulge in these activities.¹² Muslim *Khatīb* is required to

⁹ Kathy Gaca L. The Making of Fornication: Eros, Ethics, and Political Reform in Greek (California: University of California press, 2003), 7.

¹⁰ See: Al-Furqān 25: 68-70.

¹¹ Wilson M. Compton, Yonette F. Thomas, Kevin P Conway, James D Colliver," Developments in the epidemiology of drug use and drug use disorders." *American Journal of Psychiatry* 162, no. 8 (2005):1494-1502.

¹² Al-Baqara:219.

focus in his Friday sermon on bad effects of the mentioned evils and educate the Muslims to remain away from alcohol, drugs, addiction and gambling.

Intolerance

One of the social evils exist in Muslim societies is "intolerance". Intolerance is also the cause of moral deterioration as well as spoiling the social relationship of individuals. Muslim societies suffer a lot because of intolerance of other societies and countries. Intolerance results in discrimination, hatred and crime in society. Muslims should respect, be polite and show tolerance to others. Quran Says:

"Call to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with them in the best manner"¹³

Conclusion

Friday sermon is one of the most important means to address the ethical problems of contemporary Muslim societies. This sermon specializes in features not available in any other media platform. It represents a ritual of Islam, and takes place in a solemn atmosphere in which souls prepare to listen. Through this channel preachers can spread positive values, and direct Muslims towards the required high morals and excellent manners. It can play a pivotal role in the formation of an ideal society based on truth, love, respect for others, tolerance, cooperation, harmony, peace, nobility and sympathy. If adopted in the spirit of Islam, it can be very helpful in solving the ethical issues of modern-day Muslim societies.

13 Al-Nahl 16: 125.