



Guidebook of Imams and Religious Counselors outside the Islamic World

by

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Foreword

It is my pleasure to present to our esteemed readers this **Guidebook for Imams and Religious Counselors outside the Islamic World**. The relevance of this Guidebook's topic is such that it warrants the full attention of cultural centers and Islamic associations outside the Islamic world, in view of its close association with the issue of image redressing that is part of the program to counter the media smear campaigns waged against Islam and Muslims.

The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), as a reference and expertise center in education, science, culture and communication matters, has conferred the utmost importance on the training of *imams*, conscious of the crucial part they play in the lives of Muslims, at all times and in all places, but most importantly of the religious dimension that allows them to perform different religious rites, provide counseling and social services such as reconciling the Muslims and partaking of their moments of joy and sorrow. The *Imam* enjoys the unanimous consensus of the Muslim community within which he endeavors to serve the higher interests of Muslims and the causes of the Islamic Ummah whilst adhering to the path of moderation, tolerance and kindness as he preaches the good word, true to Allah's verse: [***Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious.***] The *Imam* is equally expected to preserve the spiritual wellbeing of the community of believers and keep them away from strife, division and alienation. He must safeguard the sanctity of the mosque and preserve it against dissension and discord of any nature, mindful of the need to bring about spiritual and social peace and religious serenity.

Conscious of this importance, ISESCO had developed an action program for the training of *imams*. This program was introduced and adopted during the 9th meeting of the Supreme Council for Education, Science and Culture for Muslims outside the Islamic World, held in June 2008 in Moscow. In the same vein, ISESCO presented this program at the 7th meeting of the Heads of Islamic Cultural Centers and Associations in Latin America and the Caribbean, which held in June 2008 in Margarita Island, Venezuela. Subsequently, ISESCO held its first training session for *imams* in Singapore in October 2008 to the benefit of Islamic Cultural Centers and Associations in South-East Asia and

the Pacific. In 2009, ISESCO held two training sessions, the first was in Aachen in Germany and the second in Tirana, Albania, while a third session was organized in 2010 in Brussels, Belgium. More sessions were held for the benefit of *imams* and *du'ats* in Africa to train them in the use of information and communication technologies to spread the culture of peace and justice and promote Islam and its civilization. Similarly, the 11th meeting of the Supreme Council for Education, Science and Culture for Muslims outside the Islamic World and the 1st Forum of the Presidents of Cultural Centers and Associations outside the Islamic world, both held in Rabat in November 2010, recommended the development of a guidebook for *imams* and religious counselors operating outside the Islamic world. Several training sessions were successively held for the benefit of these *imams* and religious counselors. One such session was held in Lisbon (Portugal) in 2011, and two others in 2012, respectively in Foz do Iguacu in Brazil and Padua in Italy, around the theme of countering stereotypes on Islam and Muslims conveyed by Western media. ISESCO also organized a symposium on the training of *imams* in cooperation with the University of Strasbourg and the Observatory of Geopolitical Studies affiliated to the Paris-Sorbonne University. In the same vein, ISESCO organized a training session in 2013 for the benefit of *imams* in Palermo, on the Italian island of Sicily.

The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is pleased to publish this Guidebook as part of its endeavor to implement the program to train *imams* and religious counselors on the values of dialogue, moderation and the middle stance, launched five years ago in cooperation with our brothers at the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in the State of Kuwait and the World Islamic Charitable Organization. The publication of this Guidebook represents the crowning of ISESCO's experiences on the ground in this field. For the development of this Guidebook, we called upon the expertise of Professor Abdeslem Elahmer, member of the Rabita Mohammadia of 'Ulema of the Kingdom of Morocco and one of the supervisors of ISESCO's training sessions, to help the *imams* and religious counselors outside the Islamic world carry out their mission in the best possible manner. It is our hope as we publish this practical academic guidebook, that its benefits will be far-reaching.

Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri
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Educational, Scientific and Cultural
Organization (ISESCO)

Introduction

This Guidebook was developed with the aim of supporting the aspirations of *imams* and religious counselors as they carry out their noble mission with the highest level of integrity and professionalism, and in light of the temporal and spatial transformations that have made addressing the people and contributing to their guidance a momentous responsibility and a complex task. Added to this is the progress achieved in modern communication technologies and their tremendous popularity, especially among the young who represent society's capital and embody its hope for a bright future where justice, moral security and economic prosperity prevail.

Many are the reasons justifying the renewal of the Islamic discourse and making it more flexible and stronger in argumentation. At the forefront of these reasons is the fact that this discourse was founded on an ultimate divine message, a message that addresses all humanity with faith, virtue and peace, calling for the assertion of Man's freedom, responsibility and sovereignty on earth. The shrinking distances between peoples, the interconnectedness of all countries, and the similarity of the challenges facing them, including the growing spiritual void, have all imposed on *imams* and religious counselors the necessity of putting to the optimal use all these considerations in order to reformulate the Islamic discourse. Thus renewed, this discourse would be able to bring to light the truth of Islam, its rationality and its moderation, to promote dialogue with different cultures and civilizations, favor further rapprochement, interaction and cooperation among the globe's peoples and support the causes of security, peace and stability around the world.

This Guidebook is the culmination of the experience acquired through the many *imam* training sessions held in Singapore (2008), Aachen - Germany (2009), Tirana - Albania (2009), Brussels - Belgium (2010), Lisbon - Portugal (2011), Padua - Italy (2012) and Foz do Iguaçu (Brazil).

This training initiative included presentations on the culture of dialogue, moderation and the middle stance and on communication techniques, as well as workshops on these aspects and courses on how to prepare the Friday *khutba*, sermons and the art of delivering them.

The present guidebook seeks to fulfill these ends and extend their benefits as widely as possible.

First: Objectives of the Guidebook

Procedural objectives of the Guidebook

- To present the fundamentals of spreading the culture of dialogue, the middle stance and moderation;
- To introduce simple and effective methodologies for the preparation of sermons and speeches and improving their declamation;
- To explain the *daa'wa* mission entrusted to *imams*, its methodology, means and impediments;
- To identify the dysfunctions observed in the discourse of *imams* and religious counselors, and explore ways of overcoming these imbalances;
- To describe some principles and guidelines related to organization and administration;
- To draw attention to the importance of understanding the laws of the host country, particularly those related to the practice of religious counseling and supervisory activities;
- To provide basic guidelines on the modalities of communication and dialogue with the followers of other religions and doctrines;
- To list some valuable studies on the duties of *imams* and religious counselors;
- To sensitize *imams* and religious counselors to the necessity of improving their skills in the language of the host country as well as in the use of new technologies.

General objectives of the Guidebook

Keeping in mind these proposals for the content of the Guidebook for *Imams* and Religious Counselors in mind, its general objectives would be formulated as follows:

- To define the duties and responsibilities of the *Imam* as seen in light of modern advances and transformations;

- To guide the *imam*'s culture to be in synergy with Islam's middle stance and the universality of its message;
- To build innovative capabilities through the effective use of technology and efficient methodologies in the delivery of sermons and in communication;
- To build the capacities of *imams* in administration, *daa'wa* and dialogue.

Second: Broad lines of the Guidebook's preparation

Will this endeavor take the shape of a book addressing in its chapters and specific entries the issues of concern to *imams* and counselors? Or will it differ in its approach from other books? In what aspects should it differ in order to be truly capable of benefiting and influencing its target audience?

The Guidebook seeks to be more of a self-training tool than a didactic documentary work. The user will be encouraged to interact positively with its contents thanks to the way in which they are presented. It will now and again prompt the user to revisit his own ideas or develop new modes of action, or even design a personal methodology that speaks to his own convictions and qualifications, and to the transformations and specificities of his social environment.

This Guidebook has been designed to present information in a dynamic format that starts by raising questions, progresses to analyzing them and then proposes appropriate alternatives to different flawed ideas, practices and methods. It promotes creativity and innovation in methods whilst respecting certain established criteria which, together with other elements, make the Guidebook a valuable document that draws on the experience and know-how of its user and his willingness to renew his working methods by abandoning what hinders his success and excellence as he goes about accomplishing his duties and functions.

Following is a detailed description of this methodology:

▪ Formulating relevant questions

This approach seeks to stimulate reflection on all issues addressed in this Guidebook and prompt the user to find a solution or answer before perusing the contents of the Guidebook, then decide whether to agree with or challenge it, either partially or fully, with certain considerations and arguments

in mind. The Guidebook aspires to avoid the error of ready-made solutions that may not be of interest or may be reluctantly and unenthusiastically received. Instead, it seeks to achieve the mobilization of hearts and minds by raising awareness of their responsibilities, stimulating debate and provoking meaningful reflection on various matters. The aim is to reach what is best and most suitable for each party, each according to their ambitions and abilities and according to the constant and variable needs of the audience.

▪ **Combining flaw diagnosis with proposal of alternatives**

The Guidebook seeks to build its concepts and choices on realistic data and sensitize the addressee to shortcomings and inadequacies. The aim is to condition the user to search for an alternative that is free of the flaws and inadequacies that undermine many practices and hinder their fulfillment.

The introduction of alternatives levels the ground for a weighting comparison that is based on clear evidence and insight. It flows in the direction of a judicious choice between attachment to the familiar but exposing its negative aspects, or opting for the better alternative aiming for renewal and development.

▪ **Embracing and strengthening personal experience**

There are three categories of addressees targeted by the Guidebook's discourse:

- Those whose practice falls short of what this Guidebook advocates. In this case, they will be urged to change by renouncing these practices, either entirely or partially, and replacing them with the methods and novel content the Guidebook proposes or helps infer and builds, in line with its guiding principles.
- Those whose practices are on par with those proposed in the Guidebook. In this case, they will perceive it as a valediction and proof of the correctness of their approach, encouraging them to adhere to it and derive pride from it. Their confidence may increase in their creative abilities and they may innovate with higher quality and more earnest approaches, drawing from the spirit of the Guidebook which seeks to enhance creative capabilities.
- Those who realize that that their approach is far more advanced than what is proposed in the Guidebook. However, this category will realize that the

guidebook has not limited excellence and mastery within rigid methods and approaches. Instead, it has provided guidelines and laid foundations for further creativity through all means available.

▪ **Using graphics and illustrations**

Graphics and illustrations are granted special attention in the Guidebook. They are seen as a tool to concentrate and synthesize information, and to highlight the relationship between various data segments within a limited space.

These graphics allow the quick understanding of certain facts, help with their memorization and facilitate their quoting when required.

▪ **Using supporting texts**

Prose and poetry have a unique attractiveness in supporting an idea and conferring considerable power and legitimacy on it. They prompt profound contemplation and enhance the pleasure taken within the context in which they are quoted.

These texts will be used where deemed necessary, set apart within their own box, indicating that they are quoted in support of the content surrounding them, without being directly attached to it.

▪ **Presenting sample khutbas and sermons reflecting the approved methodologies**

The Guidebook proposes samples *khutbas* and sermons or some of their parts, as dictated by clarity needs. For example, some samples may be suggested for the opening of a sermon or the introduction of its subject, or different formulations of content presentation whilst focusing on salient points, all of which enhances the practical aspect of the Guidebook and increases its functional value.

CHAPTER ONE

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING *IMAMS*

Introduction

The mosque has always been a symbol of Islam's generous contributions to all fields of religious, cultural and social life. From the mosque shone the light of guidance over the entire world and within its folds evolved a plethora of Islamic sciences. In its schools were educated the great and eminent Muslim figures thanks to whom Islam reigned over the earth for centuries as its glory and civilizational achievements spread to the far reaches of the globe.

This vanguard position can only be recovered if the mosque reclaims its religious, cultural and social roles. To do this, it is essential to tackle with the greatest attention and importance the process of preparing the *imams* and religious counselors who carry the largest share of the responsibility of reviving the mosque's mission in peoples' lives.

This mission can be summarized in the following:

First: Role of the mosque in religious, cultural and social life

▪ Religious role of the mosque

There was a time in the last centuries when the mosque's function was limited to prayers, performed by a handful of elderly people!

Is the role of the mosque then limited to the accomplishment of prayers?

For Muslims, the mosque is a place of worship where prayers, the backbone of religion, are accomplished five times a day. Religious texts elevated the merit of praying in group by declaring its worth as twenty-seven times that of an individual prayer.⁽¹⁾ The call to prayer rises from minarets five times a day, urging Muslims to head to the mosque and secure the reward of this

(1) Abdullah Ibn' Omar reported the following *hadith* by the Messenger (PBUH): "*The prayer in community is worth twenty-seven fold the prayer performed individually.*" **Sahih al-Bukhari**, Book: The Beginning of Revelation, Chapter: The Obligation of Collective Prayers.

collective rite (Come to prayer, Come to salvation). On a linguistic plane, the *Masjid* (mosque) is derived from the word *Sujud* (prostration), which represents one of the repetitive obligations of praying. The mosque is thus the place of prostration and all other actions that go with it, such as kneeling, the invocation of the name of Allah, and other displays of devout obedience and supplications.

The Almighty says: ***[(Lit is such a light) in houses which Allah hath permitted to be raised to honor; for the celebration in them of His name: in them is He glorified in the mornings and in the evenings (again and again). By men whom neither traffic nor merchandise can divert from the Remembrance of Allah nor from regular Prayer nor from the practice of regular Charity: their (only) fear is for the Day when hearts and eyes will be transformed (in a world wholly new).]*** (*Nur*: 37-36).

All mosques face the Kaa'ba in al-Masjid al-Haram, embodying the unity of the Islamic Ummah, eternally symbolized by the *qibla*. Kneeling and prostration rituals are performed in all parts of the world facing this *qibla*, at each second of the day and the night.

Towards this *qibla* dead Muslims are laid to rest, and towards it also are positioned the animals at the moment of sacrifice. It is prohibited to face the *qibla* when responding to a call of nature, thus raising the *qibla* above all forms of desecration, glorifying its position in religion and within the hearts of all Muslims.

It should be recalled that the first building erected by the Prophet (PBUH) upon his arrival in Medina after the *hijra* was the mosque of Quba'. Since then, Muslims have followed this tradition all over the world. They give building mosques and their architecture the attention and status they deserve, lavishing aesthetic and architectural care on them. Particular interest is taken in providing those in charge of mosques with the highest academic qualifications. Mosques are built at the heart of residential districts, cities and villages and rise as a living symbol of the residents' faith, a beacon guiding generation after generation, and the focus of their religious, cultural and social activities.

Despite the great influence of the media, researchers believe that direct contact between individuals is more likely to impact people and lead to a change in opinion. It has a more profound impact than listening to the radio, watching television, reading newspapers or magazines, etc.

(*Mass Media and Society*, page 232).

While the cultural and social roles of mosques have noticeably regressed once these two functions were entrusted to other institutions, the religious role has acquired greater importance, buoyed by the increase in Islamic religiosity witnessed today, especially now that the contemporary material civilization has revealed its inability to fulfill Man's spiritual needs. In fact, the mosque has been gradually reclaiming the cultural and social functions once lost, as a result of the reinvigoration of its religious function.

The world's attention has once again turned to the mosque, raising the interest of researchers from within and outside the Islamic world. For some, the mosque embodies the unity the Ummah and the resumption of its civilizational contributions. Others see in it a breeding ground of radicalism and a threat to peace and stability, internally and externally.

These critically important considerations have fuelled a revival of the role of the mosque as a place of conscious and enlightened worship, a space for education about Islam's moderation and ethics, and for immersing oneself in the values of love, mercy and peace.

These noble objectives are further validation of the need for further attention to the training of *imams* and religious counselors, to prepare them for carrying with the necessary competence the weighty responsibilities assigned to them.

▪ Cultural role of the mosque

Is the function of the mosque still limited to prayers? Or has it begun to reclaim its other cultural roles along with the part it plays in religious life?

The mosque has always served as the arena of religious culture, along with the accomplishment of the prescribed rites of worship. Among these are the Friday *khutba* and other sermons that have become a key tool of wide

ranging benefit. Mosques have also served as academic chairs that combined various disciplines of Charia science, such as Quranic sciences, Sunnah, Fiqh, Islamic jurisprudence and the biography of the Prophet (PBUH). To these disciplines were added Arabic language sciences such as rhetoric, grammar, metrics, poetry, prose, but also chronicling, documentation, history, geography, mathematics, astrology, etc. The first Islamic universities saw light within the folds of the mosque institution, such as al-Quaraouiyine University in Fez, Morocco, and al-Azhar University in Cairo. Most prestigious schools have become affiliated with and attached to the mosque institution.

Today, many mosques are trying to reclaim their scientific and cultural vocation, especially in the West. In addition to the prayer hall and ablution facilities, their buildings comprise schools to teach the Quran, Arabic and the precepts of Islam to children, as well as the language of the host country to Muslim communities living in foreign countries. The mosque building also includes a conference hall, a space for meetings and cultural activities, a library, a dedicated playground or even stadium for children and young people to play sports and games.

Mosques now host competitions for the memorization and recitation of the Quran and other contests in Islamic culture, athletics and football, exhibitions of Islamic books, children's books or children's creations in prose, poetry, writing and drawing. Such activities, when engaged in by children at the mosque and its various facilities, imbue them with a sense of the values of Islam and its guiding principles. They grow up on the love of Islam and their hearts are infused with its lofty morals, thus gaining immunity against the abominations of their surroundings and which run counter to the spirit of Islam and its eternal divine teachings.

▪ **Social role of the mosque**

The mosque has played an important social role in the lives of Muslims. What does this role consist of?

Since its first establishment by the Messenger (PBUH) in Medina, the mosque has acquired a multidimensional social role. It was inside a mosque that *Shura* councils convened to examine the affairs of the nascent state, to make decisions and receive foreign emissaries. In another part of this

edifice, magistrates sat to arbitrate between people, and in yet another part the wounded were treated. A section was dedicated to teaching the Holy Quran to children and adults, as well as reading and writing. It was also in this building that donations, Zakat and the spoils of the war were collected and distributed to the poor. Even more, marriages were concluded and celebrated within the mosque, as is evident from reported stories of the past.⁽²⁾

One of the edifying results of collective prayers at the mosque is that when Muslims stand in tight rows, they touch each other's shoulders and feet and thus enter into a state of total symbiosis between the rich and the poor, the adult and the young, the senior and the subordinate, the scholar and the illiterate. In these moments, hearts embrace each other, moved by the physical closeness of bodies, and in so doing erase all ethnic, social and other differences that separate them.

In fact, straightening rows during prayers is essential to their performance. Before uttering the *takbir* phrases signaling the beginning of the prayer, the *Imam* reminds all of the need to straighten rows⁽³⁾ following in the steps of the Messenger (PBUH): "*Set your rows straight, stand in moderation and leave no gap for Satan. Be humble and lenient towards your brothers, for Allah does not look at the crooked row.*"⁽⁴⁾

The alignment of bodies into tight rows for prayers, five times a day, instills in the hearts of the faithful a sense of harmony, compassion and affection and commits the faithful to show more love, brotherliness and cohesion.⁽⁵⁾ Thus, one of the most important functions of a mosque is to reinforce the ties of

(2) This included the *hadith* which says: "*Proclaim this marriage and do it at the mosque, and play tambourines on this occasion.*" Narrated by al-Tirmidi who qualified it as good but *gharib* on the authority of Aisha. Al-Hafiz IbnHijr labelled it in al-Fath as having a weak chain of narration.

(3) Be lenient towards your brothers: meaning be accommodating if you are asked to straighten the rows by coming closer or doing what is required to straighten rows.

(4) The Prophet (PBUH) said: "*Straighten your rows, for it is part of perfecting the prayer.*"

(5) Nu'maanIbn Bashir said: "*The Prophet (PBUH) used to straighten our rows as if he were straightening the shaft of a bow, until he was satisfied we had learned how to do it. One day, he was about to pronounce the takbir when he noticed a man whose chest was sticking out from the row. He said: "Slaves of Allah! Make your rows straight or Allah will cause discord among you."* (Narrated by Muslim).

Islamic brotherhood, indispensable for the fulfillment of religious obligations and responsibilities, and for spreading the spirit of social solidarity, *takaful* and compassion among Muslims.

In the life of the Messenger (PBUH) and whenever there was a need to meet outside prayer times, the call for the prayer would be sounded. If the Friday prayer was conducted at a mosque it would be called a *jami'* (the gathering place) as the venue set for the gathering of the town or village. In this place were met the conditions for convergence in a most general and comprehensive way.

Scholars deem it necessary to have one *jami'* but many mosques, reflecting the unity of the town or the village, unless the town expanded and its districts became too far apart, in which case it was permissible to have several *jami's* to ease matters for people and reduce the hardships of movement.

During the daily prayer congregations, people from the same district get to know each other and to enquire about each other's state. They help the needy, comfort the aggrieved, send off the traveller, receive the newly-arrived, visit the sick, consult each other on the affairs of their neighborhood or village, provide mutual advice and interact with each other with kind words and the greeting of peace, and through good and charitable deeds.

In non-Muslim countries, the mosque ambitions to perform multiple functions. Its scope of action has broadened to encompass all these religious, cultural and social activities. It has become the only Islamic environment where the Muslim basks in the shade of religious faith, purity, rectitude and Islamic spirituality, invigorated by a strong dose of faith that enables him to evolve in a society with myriad inclinations and customs.

As its functions expanded and multiplied, the mosque has set up an administration with permanent officials, each carrying a specific responsibility. The mosque is thus placed under the supervision of a cultural association recognized by local authorities.

Second: Specificity, mission and responsibilities of the Islamic discourse

What are the particularities of the Islamic discourse which, if neglected, can impact on its substance, method of presentation and dimension as a

message, and which must serve as focal points in the training of *imams* to convey and strengthen them both conceptually and practically?

- To bring people in contact with the Charia, Prophet's teachings, and the guidelines of Muslim theologians and scholars;
- To highlight the facts of religion and mandatory obligations, and raise the addressees' awareness about their responsibility in heeding them, without imposing constraints on them that they would not have voluntarily imposed on themselves;
- To endeavor to convince through preaching and argumentation, resorting to appeal and not repulsion, clemency and not harshness, and advancing steadily, far from any zealotry or rush;
- To take into consideration the psychological and social conditions of the audience, graciously accept their excuses, and remain mindful of their cognitive level and general condition.

Which other specificities are not mentioned in the above?

- Mission of the Islamic discourse

Which dimensions of the mission of the Islamic discourse must be pivotal in the training of *imams* and religious counselors?

- To educate and banish the specter of ignorance of religion;
- To remind everyone of Allah's precepts and the teachings of His religion, as well as the prerequisites of a happy life both here and in the hereafter;
- To raise awareness of the great responsibility human beings carry in this life and their inherent obligations in all aspects of life;
- To caution people against neglected or badly performed obligations, as well as failings committed out of ignorance or carelessness;
- To analyze the community's problems and propose solutions from an Islamic perspective;
- To advocate morals that feature prominently in religion, and urge people to refrain from the reprehensible and detestable behaviors that have spread in society and that bring disgrace.

Contribute by adding other elements you believe to be equally important.

▪ **Responsibilities of *Imams* and counselors**

Based on the functional dimensions of the Islamic discourse, what are the responsibilities of *imams* and religious counselors?

- To teach people the knowledge they lack in their religion;
- To strive to renew their own knowledge, develop their know-how and improve their discourse in order to keep abreast of developments in the conditions and mindsets of their addressees. This would provide them with insight, in terms of Sharia, into the events, actions and phenomena that surround them in the ever-changing reality;
- To preserve and further develop the intrinsic goodness and rectitude perceived in the hearts of their audience and avoid a rapid transition to a better state so as not to destabilize their audience. The mission of *Imams* and counselors consists of bringing them the closest to goodness and the farthest possible from evil and corruption;
- To reconcile their hearts, instill affection and the spirit of Islamic brotherhood in them and dispel anything that may shatter their harmony and provoke conflicts and strife;
- To be cognizant of the ideas, trends and laws in force in the host country and their impact on their opinions, stances and reactions, and act according to their own evaluation of these impacts on their faith and actions both within their families and in society.

Add other responsibilities not mentioned above.

▪ **Responsibilities of the audience**

No matter how powerful the discourse and how right its contents are, its impact remains conditional upon the willingness of the audience to respond to it and open up to the facts and truths it puts forth.

Most people believe that *imams* are exclusively responsible for the reform of hearts and the improvement of behavior and attitudes. They forget the audience's responsibility which is to heed the discourse addressed to them and comply with its contents.

How then to define the responsibility of the audience vis-à-vis the Islamic discourse?

Irrespective of its thrust, a discourse is grasped through people's psyche and the condition of this psyche is a determining factor. It can be strong or weak, prey to weakness or temptations, slow to understand or poor of language. It can also depend on choices in life as people tend to allow some aspect or the other to permeate and condition the way they grasp the discourse's essence and act upon it.

The listener may also be convinced of the soundness of the discourse but may not find in himself the ability to immediately abide by it. He simply stores the information in his mind until he feels ready to act upon it.

Sometimes, and though recognizing the soundness of the discourse and its arguments, he may reject and contest it, either for frivolous and whimsical reasons, or because it runs counter to his financial interests, status or other material gains.

Thus, reforming people's conditions is not always contingent upon their mere knowledge of this reform's means and conditions, but is basically dependent on the willingness to be reformed and readiness to set out on this path.

Third: Dysfunctions in Islamic discourse practices and their causes

1. Conceptual dysfunctions

The key reason behind the decision to train, re-train, redress and refine the training of *imams* and religious counselors is the inadequacies and dysfunctions noted in their discourse. These not only undermine their important status and hinder their interaction with the audience, but also lead to a conceptual and behavioral deviation from Islam. Which of these dysfunctions are the most notable?

There are two types of dysfunctions in the work of *imams* and counselors, conceptual imbalances and technical ones.

- When the speaker departs from his status as an educator and a wise reformer to become a judge who declares some Muslims as apostates

and others as perverts or heretics, cursing sinners and denouncing their actions. He passes the ultimate sentence as he labels people as corrupt and misguided, lost souls impossible to redeem or put back on the right path, rather than encourage them to repent in order to cleanse their souls and start a new page on the path to rectitude and virtue.

- Failure to adopt the middle stance and the disruption of the balance of religious canons that preserves minds from straying far from the right path and veering towards extremism and intolerance, either by passing the limits set for seeking the truth or falling short in such quest. This is manifest in the quest to reform of people's conditions and the endeavor to understand their conditions and find an explanation for their behavior and stances. Many speakers and *du'ats* have poor knowledge of the spirit of Charia and its general and specific provisions. They apply the principle of prohibiting what may lead to committing sins without proper justification, quick to proclaim as unlawful any novel matter for which they fail to find an explanation in religious teachings.

When they are able to peruse the different opinions of theologians, radical and moderate ones, they tend to opt for the radical ones to which they add their own measure of rigidity, confident that rigor, even in matters where opinions widely diverge, is the magical balm and the path to salvation. They train people to be intolerant and uncompromising, to have shallow understanding and poor judgment and to have an equally limited scope of thought and action.

- To progress from embracing bits and pieces of arcane and dubious *ijtihad* to a total rejection of dialogue and persuasive reasoning, advocating instead coercion, threats and violence in the resolution of sectarian differences between Muslims, jurisprudential differences between their doctrines, and religious divergences with non-Muslims.
- To build the legal perspective of phenomena and events not on the evidence contained in the Quran and the Sunnah and reached by consensus and analogy, but on specific political stances or ethnic, regional or sectarian inclinations.
- To blame other parties for the problems and moral decrepitude suffered by Muslims, and fail to sensitize the latter to their own responsibility in

their own underdevelopment and malaise, and to their obligation to initiate reforms according to the approach advocated by religion.

The above list of dysfunctions is certainly far from exhaustive. In your opinion, what other imbalances must be taken into account?

And what are the technical dysfunctions affecting the discourse of *imams* and religious counselors?

2. Technical dysfunctions

- Underestimating the part played by technical aspects in the presentation of *khutbas* or sermons.
- Neglecting the mastery of foreign languages and knowledge of other cultures.
- A mediocre culture of dialogue and communication and failure to recognize the role of training on modern techniques in this field;
- The inadequate use of computers in self-education and in facilitating the accomplishment of assigned tasks;
- The lack of interest in literature and poetry which help hone personal skills and raise the discourse's aesthetic standards.

Reflect on other imbalances not mentioned above.

3. Causes of these dysfunctions

What reasons lie behind these dysfunctions?

The causes of these imbalances can be attributed to the following factors:

- Poor knowledge of the spirit, magnanimity and moderation of the Islamic Sharia and the general principles of Islam, while burdening the Islamic discourse with what is extraneous to its nature.
- The fact that potential *imams* and religious counselors limit themselves to memorizing the Holy Quran and acquiring some knowledge of the Sharia, without seeking any training in the techniques of communication and declamation of sermons and *khutbas*.

- *Khutbas* and sermons are impacted by the speaker's mood and his personal orientations, as well as by his own vision of civilizational challenges, their negative impacts on the Muslim individual and society and how to overcome them. His reactions, characterized either by rigor and tension or by laxity and permissiveness, are often the result of an inadequate understanding of the principle of advocating good and cautioning against evil, as well as preaching the word of God through sound reasoning and wise counsel.

Sheikh Tantaoui says in this regard:

One of the gravest failings marking sermons today is that the orator forgets that he is acting in the name of Allah's Messenger (PBUH) and addressing people through the voice of the Sharia, and that, as such, he must convey God's commands and not his own personal opinion. Extrapolating from their pulpits, some orators cite rules and principles that are neither authenticated nor recognized by scholars. They would have fared better if they had confined themselves to matters agreed upon by scholarly consensus, and left those of divergence to the competence of the councils of scholars.

- Some preachers pursue status, fame and admiration by people. In this pursuit, they have no qualms about accommodating people's inclinations, descending to their levels in thought and how they perceive the phenomena and events around them, and thus departing from Allah's way. These *imams* adopt popular positions founded on a shallow or flawed understanding of the greatness and flexibility of Islam, the nobility of its objectives and the dimensions of its moderate approach to education and reform. This is all the more true when the preacher is not proficient in Sharia sciences but exploits the elevated status of the Friday prayer pulpit to build his fame and reputation, more concerned with pleasing the crowds than with guiding them onto the right track.
- **Do these causes seem acceptable to you? Which points did you not agree with and why? Please add other factors that you think are important.**

Fourth: Fundamentals of the culture of the middle stance and moderation

1. The concept of the just balance

What does the just balance stance mean in Sharia?

The term '*wasat*' (just balance) appears in the Quran, the Sunnah and Islamic law in ways that denote loftiness and greatness, contrary to its usual use in certain Arabic language styles where it refers to an average state lying between positive and negative. The following verse of the Holy Quran presents the essential meanings of the term 'just balance'⁽⁶⁾:

God says: [***Thus have We made of you an Ummah justly balanced that ye might be witnesses over the nations and the Apostle a witness over yourselves.***] (*Al-Baqara*: 143).

- We have made you a community of moderation and righteousness thanks to the true religion and good deeds We have guided you to, so that you may be judges in relation to former religions (*Tafseer al-Muntakhab*);
- We have made you a community of the just balance among other nations in order to crystallize your bond with the *qibla* towards which you turn your faces in prayer. You thus stand witness, to the benefit of former nations, that their prophets have conveyed the Message and proffered good advice to them (Sayyid Tantaoui).

Allah also says: [***Said one of them more just (than the rest): "Did I not say to you 'Why not glorify (Allah)?"***] (*Al-Qalam*: 28).

- The more just, more reasonable and more righteous (*Tafseer al-Baghawi*).
- The most just in words (*Tafseer al-Baghawi* and *Tafseer al-Tabari*).
- Meaning that the best among them had exhorted them to glorify Allah (*Al-Tasheel li 'Uloom al'Tanzil* by Ibn Juzayy).
- The most just among them and the one with the best approach (*Tafseer as-Saa'di*).

(6) This work was largely based on another book by the author entitled ***The Culture of the Ummah of the Middle Stance***, published by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), 1430H/2009.

Allah (SWT) says: **[For expiation feed then indigent persons on a scale of the average for the food of your families; or clothe them; or give a slave his freedom.]** (*Al-Maida*, 89).

- A scale of the average of what you feed your household (IbnKatheer).
- Of the same value as what you feed your household (IbnKhatheer).
- The same penance but made to match the state of comfort or hardship (Ibn Katheer).

2. The middle stance in Islamic law

What is the relationship between the just balance and legal responsibilities?

A reading into responsibilities and jurisprudential duties enables us to conclude that these are placed between two diametrically opposite states. At one end lies falling short of performing the obligations assigned in line with the conditions clearly stipulated in the Sharia, and on the other end, an exaggerated performance of assigned duties, sometimes to the extent of committing the undesirable.

The table below shows some religious obligations and how these two forms of excess undermine them:

Obligation	Failure by omission	Failure by excess
Prayer	Failure to perform it, or accomplishing it inadequately or with no regard for its strict schedule and some of its conditions.	Its excessive performance in terms of conditions, pillars and various forms.
Securing a livelihood	Failure to engage in the pursuit of a livelihood and not limiting oneself to the licit pursuits of a livelihood.	The excessive pursuit of material gain at the expense of divine teachings and even engaging in what is illicit.
Devotion to parents	Showing minimal affection and love towards the parents, in ways unfitting of their worth, or having no feelings at all towards them.	Excessive devotion to parents to the point of obeying them at the risk of invoking's Allah's wrath, or bestowing on them more than what is prescribed by the Sharia.

These examples show that Sharia requirements lie halfway between two reprehensible extremes. What would be these extremes when it comes to tawhid (monotheism), worship and faith?

▪ *Tawhid* is the middle stance between atheism and polytheism

Belief in the Oneness of Allah is both a prerequisite of religion and the embodiment of Islam. It represents guidance towards good moral conduct and reason. It stands in the middle between moral lapse and blind faith, the first being failure to reach the state of belief in the oneness of God, and the second is extreme and excessive faith which could lead to associating other gods with Allah who has no associates.

▪ *Worship* is the midpoint between neglecting Man's duties towards God and asceticism

After belief in the oneness of Allah, the Muslim is faced with three options. The first is to neglect religious obligations and additional voluntary acts of worship in favor of life's distractions and temptations. The second option is to fulfill the rites of worship as they are prescribed in the Prophet's Sunnah. This option represents the middle ground of which the non-application cannot be excused under any circumstances and that every member of the Muslim Ummah must abide by regardless of their inclinations and disparate degrees of faith. In third place comes asceticism through which the individual neglects the demands of the body, curbs his natural instincts and immerses himself in praying and fasting.

▪ *Faith* is a happy medium between materialism and belief in metaphysics

Materialism refers to the exclusion of metaphysical beliefs and the adoption of the Seen world that is perceptible to the eye and open to research and experimentation.

Belief in metaphysics is diametrically opposed and revolves around belief in the unseen world (*al-ghayb*) of which the existence cannot be attested to by anything, which reason cannot admit and that science cannot determine.

The middle ground lies between these two extremes since it invites us to believe in the invisible world, as it is described in the Revelation of which the veracity is attested to by much evidence. The unseen world in which we must believe is restricted and cannot suffer additions or omissions.

3. The happy medium and the universal order

Can we consider the just balance a universal law?

Any system that governs one or the other aspect of an individual's life loses much of its power and credibility if it does not extend to the other areas of life. Through this process, it achieves a certain level of predominance over reality and ultimately over the mind.

Thus, if it manages to regulate cosmic phenomena and assert its presence in it, the scope of faith in this system and interaction with it become much greater.

With this in mind, we will try to determine the extent to which the principle of the just balance meets this condition. Is it a universal particularity in the same way it is a religious and legal one? In the following table we show how natural phenomena bow to the law of the just balance.

Phenomenon	How it bows to the law of the just balance
Position of the earth in relation to the sun	If the earth moves away from its current orbit around the sun, it would freeze up. If it comes any closer, it would ignite. In both cases, life would come to an end.
Glucose level in the blood	If this rate increases or decreases from its normal levels, the individual would be sick and constantly require insulin to lead a normal life.
Internal temperature of the human body	To diagnose the health condition of a human being, one measures his/her temperature. A temperature above or below °37C is an indication of some anomaly.
Heartbeat	The acceleration or deceleration of the heart beat is an indication of cardiac dysfunction, which condition requires medical follow-up and care to avoid a potential heart attack.

What is the general characteristic of the just balance in religious obligations?

As we observe the many manifestations of the just balance in nature, we are able to conclude that this balance represents the convergence of two opposites. A moderate climate, for example, leans as much towards cold as it

does towards heat and thus represents a state of balance between heat and cold as it draws equally from both. It is cold and hot but at the same time it is neither hot nor cold. Anything that is average in volume takes some of the small size features and some of the large size ones, the result being a balance and just medium that prevents it from swinging either way. Man emulates this divine rule commonly observed in nature, using it as a model to develop many instances of moderation suitable for his circumstances and capable of serving his interests both in religion and in life.

The following table explains how this rule invariably applies to noble values, showing that these values stand at an equal distance from two vices:

Value	How this value stands midway between two vices
Generosity	Halfway between squandering and miserliness. Generosity comprises the same measure of the impetus to spend as to refrain from waste and futile expenses.
Prudence	A central point between two axes, one is the act of spending and the second is caution about wasting money unnecessarily and for no specific interest.
Courage	A value standing halfway between temerity in the face of danger and cowardice in avoiding these dangers.
Virtue	A just balance between the quest for pleasure and material gains, and the inhibition and vilification of these urges.

4. The middle stance and life

How to adhere to the just balance in aspects of life that are polarized by opposites?

Many aspects of life are complex and the mind struggles to discern their middle stance as required by law/religion, as well as the need to refrain from swaying one way or the other, and thus miss the happy medium and disrupt the rightful perception of the matter at hand.

A salient example of these issues is the equation of choice and destiny about which people have split into two opposing blocks, each rejecting the other's position. Those who turned to evidence of Man's choice, and this evidence is

rather ample, believe that the human is responsible and accountable for all his actions. Those who recognize the evidence of pre-destiny, equally abundant, show little consideration for choice, attributing it to the law of destiny that dominates human existence.

How do we determine the middle stance in the matter of choice and destiny and avoid extremism?

There is no doubt that the manifestations of choice in Man's life are many and cannot be denied. However, the legal and practical evidence supporting pre-destiny is so abundant that to combine both these theses seems impossible. Pondering the proofs supporting one trend, one would find it so strong and persuasive as to lose interest in the evidence supporting the opposite thesis. This compels the individual to resort to hypotheses in order to embrace a position without totally opposing the other.

The solution in such extreme polarity is to apply evidence from the two opposing positions in such a way as to achieve complementarity and cohesion, as opposed to inconsistency and contradiction. This integration and convergence between two opposite dimensions is achieved in the middle ground lying between them and where each side is represented thanks to a degree of convergence, agreement and solidarity through which all divergence ceases to exist.

When we apply this approach to the dilemma of choice and pre-destiny, we reach the conclusion that Man enjoys his freedom of choice in everything relating to obligations, and bows to pre-destiny and compulsion in anything related to the creation and the management of the universe which fall to Allah's wisdom and will.

Whoever claims that Man's actions are pre-determined in everything would have leaned towards extremism, and the same applies to whoever says that Man has the ability to exercise choice in all matters.

- Choose some aspects of life where identifying the middle ground could be problematic, and try to apply the approach whereby the conflicting parties are present on an equal footing.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY OF *KHUTBA* AND SERMON PREPARATION

Introduction

The *khutba* (speech) and the sermon are two key components of the Islamic discourse as it is conveyed in mosques by *imams* and theologians. Through these two forms of address, it is possible to gauge the evolution that has occurred in this discourse. It is clear that these two elements have undergone a measure of evolution over the last decades, after breaking away from the usual stereotyping constraints. This progression is attributed to the higher level of education of *imams* of whom many benefit, directly or indirectly, from the opportunities of modern education. In fact, Islam constantly advocates change in means and methods if this change can help consolidate goals and objectives.

The evolution of the Islamic discourse, still in its early stages, has become a pressing necessity today in light of the accusations and slurs leveled at Islam, seeking to erect a wall between today's Man and Islam in its redeeming, divine and universal nature.

The *khutba* and the sermon: general intellectual and technical guidelines

▪ Defining the speaker's responsibilities

Is there a relationship between the subject addressed and the responsibilities of the audience?

There is obviously a relationship between the subjects addressed in *khutbas* and sermons and personal responsibility. The discourse is articulated around obligations (compulsory and voluntary) as prescribed by religion and the ensuing duties, deeds and morals inscribed in the religious, spiritual and behavioral aspects of religion.

Any topic that does not fall under the prescribed or proscribed requirements of religion has no place in the Islamic discourse and there is no benefit in preoccupying people with such topics when others can benefit them in this life and the hereafter, helping them recognize and pursue such benefit.

Focusing the discourse on individual responsibilities first, and collective ones second confers on this discourse a certain attraction and piques the interest of the audience. It gives it the appropriate solemnity and practicality and prevents it from falling into the trap of frivolity and rhetorical talk that serves no purpose.

It is inconceivable of the orator or preacher to speak of the responsibilities of those who cannot hear him, and enumerate the shortcomings of the absent and their failings in performing their duties, while refraining from clarifying to those present the obligations and responsibilities incumbent upon them. In failing to do so, he gives the impression that that he is concerned only with the fate of the absentees, as if to avoid up setting the audience by pointing out their lapses in their obligations and failure to question their actions and correct their flaws.

A speech that does not tackle the responsibilities of the audience and avoids reminding them of them or exhorting them to assume them goes against the very nature of Islamic commandment. It falls short of cleansing hearts and edifying an individual who is conscious of his status as Allah's vice-regent on earth and who performs his vice-regency assignments in full awareness and in competence.

▪ **Broad knowledge of the subject at hand**

What would be the limits of such knowledge?

The *Imam* enjoys the trust of the Muslim community, and his opinion is an undisputed and trustworthy source of Islamic knowledge. Most people do not have the academic capacity to verify what they are told and to sort out the wheat from the chaff. If the orator gives imprecise or false information, the consequences can be heavy and require a prompt recovery and the admission of error in public and without shame.

The speaker can avoid falling into such situations by improving his knowledge through study and research in reference works, especially books relating to speeches and sermons. He would thus be able to quote appropriate Quranic texts and *hadiths* and, if forced to cite a *hadith* with a dubious or weak chain of narration, he would be able to draw the attention of the audience to this. It is equally important to verify sources and quote academic opinions by referring to authentic and well versed specialists in the matter.

How important is it to be presentable? What criteria to observe in order to be presentable?

▪ Attention to grooming and attire

Clothes indisputably influence people's disposition. They help boost self-confidence and trust in one's abilities to accomplish a specific task, as well as in the state of awareness of one's emotional disposition, induced by the attire associated with this task.

Those who speak about Islam are expected to preach by example before preaching by word. Their appearance must reflect elegance and aesthetics if they wish people's hearts to open up to them before hearing them.

Contrary to the famous quote "the habit does not make the monk", Malek Ibn Nabi believes that the habit contributes to a certain extent in making the monk by conferring a certain cachet on him. When a person dresses in sportswear, does he not feel a sporty spirit coursing through him even if he is of weak build?⁽⁷⁾

Moreover, an appearance in harmony with the context of the discourse systematically adds value to the latter, making it more acceptable and impactful and quicker to reach hearts.

Indeed, as the congregation listens, their eyes are usually riveted to the person in front of them, examining the features of his face and searching in his demeanor and appearance for a sense of the words he is projecting into their minds and hearts.

Thus, when words match appearance, a rapport is forged between the speaker and the audience, and when they clash, the transmission process is disrupted and the desired effect is lost.

Ibn Handhalia reports: The Messenger (PBUH) said one day: "*You are on your way to meet your brothers, so put your saddles in order and tidy your dresses, until you appear as distinct among people as a beauty mark [on a beautiful face]. Allah does not like roughness and rough manners.*"

Narrated and authenticated by Al-Hakim in al-Mustadrak.

(7) *Shurut an-Nahda*, Dar al-Fikr, p. 434.

Appropriate clothing must meet various criteria, including:

- Respect the country's dress code. There is no objection to introducing slight modifications so that it is more adapted to the situation of the speaker or preacher;
- Avoid external manifestations that confine the speaker within a certain category of Muslims. This could stir the antagonism and rejection of those who have developed a hostile stance towards this category. One of the conditions of the *imam's* success in his mission is to win the hearts of all people, regardless of their doctrinal diversities and tendencies;
- The clothes must be elegant and appropriate in themselves and avoid being transparent, narrow or loose. They must be clean, carefully ironed and perfumed, and befitting their recognized status as scholars and custodians of knowledge.

▪ **Nature of subjects and their relevance to the problems experienced by the audience**

How to select themes that echo the needs of the audience?

The *Imam's* first preoccupation must be the subject of his *khutba* or sermon, a subject that must meet the expectations of the people and satisfy some pressing need they have. The following reveal some of the ways to confer appeal on a given subject:

- Ensure that the audience relates closely to the subject by focusing attention either on what will be useful to them, could bring them happiness, or make them feel honored, dignified and privileged in this world and in the hereafter. The subject must also meet any aspirations of the human soul and address any woes, pain, unhappiness, grief, regret, humiliation and loss both in this world and in the hereafter, as well as anything that the soul finds repugnant and tries to evade. Allah says in this regard: [***Now have come to you from your Lord proofs to open your eyes: if any will see it will be for (the good of) his own soul; if any will be blind it will be to his own (harm): I am not (here) to watch over your doings.***] (*Al-An'am*: 104);

- Clarify the close relationship between gain and pain, between profit and loss, or between any good or bad the individual faces in life, as well as his full responsibility in all circumstances. The aim is for him to discipline his soul by correcting its deviations and flaws, nurturing its virtues and curing any diseases that lie at the root of the difficulties and sufferings Man must face in this world and the hereafter. Allah says in this context: [**Allah created the heavens and the earth for just ends and in order that each soul may find the recompense of what it has earned and none of them be wronged.**] (*Al-Jathiya*: 22);
- Link any talk about the subject to the action it calls for and which translates into an obligation to be performed, a fact desirable for its reward, or a prohibition or a detestable action that should be shunned in the pursuit of reward. The mission of the orator is to reveal obligations and prohibitions, and to highlight the true meaning of the commandment so people can decide of their actions in all freedom and responsibility, as stipulated in this verse: [**Thy duty is to (make the Message) reach them: it is Our part to call them to account.**] (*Ar-Ra'd*: 40).

To overcome the dilemma of choice between many subjects, the following steps may be taken:

- Choosing the topic based on the questions raised by the men and women who come to pray, thus ensuring that it reflects their daily preoccupations and concerns. The speaker must mention at the beginning of the *khutba* that the subject was chosen in response to the questionings of some mosque visitors, to show its relevance to everyday life, but also to draw attention to the importance of the address;
- Conducting a diagnosis of the audience's conditions and various concerns requiring urgent attention/counsel in the context of the *khutba* or sermon;
- Drawing up a list of the questions requiring attention, taking into account the following parameters: importance of the subject, its relevance in time and its urgency. Each subject would be given a mark of 2 ,1 or 3 for each of these three criteria.

- The total marks for each topic would be worked out and then a priority ranking of topics would be established from the most to the least pressing, as in the following example:

Subject	Importance	Relevance	Readiness	Total	Priority ranking
How to welcome Ramadan	1	1	3	5	3
Attempted suicide of a young Muslim	1	1	2	4	2
Increasing tendency of praying back to back	2	2	3	7	4
Enquiry from a young man for advice about greeting girls with kisses	1	1	1	3	1

The final marks of the subjects determine their importance when examined together to establish the weight of the three criteria.

▪ Preparation and the importance of a clear methodology

Topics of *khutbas* and sermons can be highly diverse. Can they all follow a uniform methodology or does each one require a customized approach?

The adoption of a different methodology for each topic addressed in a *khutba* or sermon makes the *imam's* work disorderly, lacking in methodology and therefore taxing and thought provoking as he searches for a way to customize his addresses. He may find himself unable to find a logical sequence for the *khutba*, the result being a confusing *khutba*, lacking in innovation and in seriousness. As he speaks, he becomes aware of the weakness and oversimplicity of his words and is filled with a sense of disappointment and failure. This has a negative impact on the audience who slide into distraction and lethargy, the words having almost no impact on their hearts, save for boredom and indifference.

The adoption of a clear and consistent methodology for *khutbas*, and a similar one for sermons, will save the orator the trouble of devising a methodology every time he needs to prepare his text, and to focus all his attention and effort on applying this specific methodology to the topic at hand.

The methodology also allows the *imam* to identify salient points or striking elements that might confer on the theme further strength and appeal.

“The fatal mistake that many make is to neglect the preparation of their speeches. How do they hope to overcome their fear and anguish when they set out to climb a mountain armed with tattered ropes or no ropes at all? It is no wonder that they never feel comfortable in front of their audience.”

▪ Attention to some particularity of the subject

What is meant by a particularity of the subject and how to give it the warranted attention?

The topic of a *khutba* can be made more attractive by giving it a specific character that sets it apart from all others, and thus manage to pique the interest of the audience and banish boredom and inattention. It greatly helps to associate the intellectual content with an aesthetic touch that draws the attention of the people who, whilst enjoying it and benefitting, begin to appreciate the skill of the *Imam* in speech and declamation.

The specificity of the topic, manifest through certain features, places the entire theme within a frame from beginning to end. It confers on the *khutba* or sermon a cachet that makes it a unique piece of innovation where beauty and structure collude with depth of meaning.

For example, the particularity of a poem is a style of expression that stirs the imagination through its figurative images, the various forms of known versification and the choice of a unified rhyme to give the poem the rhythm that exults the listener's ear and enchants it.

The same aesthetic creativity emerges in architecture where it is expressed by the uniqueness of geometric forms and the coordinated character of ornaments adorning all parts and minutiae of the building, giving it its final

architectural appearance that distinguishes it from other buildings, although the same building and embellishment materials were used.

How can the *Imam* give the subject of his *khutba* or sermon its particular cachet? What are the elements involved in giving body to this particularity?

There are many ways and elements involved in giving shape to the particularity of a theme. The same topic can have a multitude of particularities depending on the *Imam* who develops and delivers it, his talent and skill and his awareness of the crucial innovation factor. The following methods allow the discourse to acquire its specific character.

The theme is a determinant of a speech's particularity with the text being articulated around this subject and never digressing from it. No less important are the data and content used to flesh out and analyze the text but also to strengthen the character, provided they are formulated in an excellent way that enables a given aspect to stand out throughout the speech and suffuse all its sentences and paragraphs.

A word or a sentence that occur repeatedly throughout the text maybe be an indication of the speech's particularity. These would be repeated throughout the speech and confer an attractive appeal that favors attentiveness and understanding.

The Quran has followed this approach in almost all its chapters as each has its own specific character that sets it apart from other *suras*.

One such repetition can be observed in the chapter of *Ar-Rahman* where the divine phrase [***Which of the blessings of your Lord will you deny?***] occurs repeatedly:

[(He is) Lord of the two Easts and Lord of the two Wests! Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny? He has let free the two bodies of flowing water meeting together: Between them is a Barrier which they do not transgress: Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny? Out of them come Pearls and Coral. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny? And His are the Ships sailing smoothly through the seas lofty as mountains: there is between them a barrier that they do not exceed. Which of the benefits of your Lord will you deny of these two [seas]: take out the pearl and the coral. Which of the favors of your Lord will you deny? To Him belong the ships lifted up on the sea like mountains.

Which of the blessings of your Lord will you deny?]

Also, all the verses follow the same alliteration pattern.

This specific character can also take the form of a repetitive rhetorical question to which the answer gradually unfolds in the sermon, bringing back the listener at regular intervals to the gist of the sermon and conveying a sense of the weight of the responsibility or obligation addressed.

In the chapter of *at-Tur* (42-38), most of the verses are presented in the form of a question.

[Or have they a ladder by which they can (climb up to heaven and) listen (to its secrets)? Then let (such a) listener of theirs produce a manifest proof. Or has He only daughters and ye have sons? Or is it that thou dost ask for a reward so that they are burdened with a load of debt? Or that the Unseen is in their hands and they write it down? Or do they intend a plot (against thee)? But those who defy Allah are themselves involved in a Plot!]

The particular nature of a subject can also take shape through a dialogue during which suspicion is cast and then immediately dispelled as in the Chapter of *Yunus* (36-31).

"Say: "Who is it that sustains you (in life) from the sky and from the earth? Or who is it that has power over hearing and sight? And who is it that brings out the living from the dead and the dead from the living? And who is it that rules and regulates all affairs?" They will soon say "Allah." Say "Will ye not then show piety (to Him)?" Such is Allah your real Cherisher and Sustainer: apart from Truth what (remains) but error? How then are ye turned away? Thus is the Word of thy Lord proved true against those who rebel: verily they will not believe. Say: "Of your `partners' can any originate creation and repeat it?" Say: "It is Allah Who originates Creation and repeats it: then how are ye deluded away (from the truth)?" Say: "Of your `partners' is there any that can give any guidance towards Truth?" Say: "It is Allah Who gives guidance towards Truth. Is then He Who gives guidance to Truth more worthy to be followed or he who finds not guidance (himself) unless he is guided? What then is the matter with you? How judge ye?" But most of them follow nothing but fancy: truly fancy can be of no avail against Truth. Verily Allah is well aware of all that they do.]

Style can also serve as a medium to clearly present content, arranging its ideas and presenting them under different forms: using rhymes and setting a rhythm for the words from beginning to end.

Such example appears in the chapter of *Mariam* (95-84):

[So make no haste against them for We but count out to them a (limited) number (of days). The day We shall gather the righteous to (Allah) Most Gracious like a band presented before a king for honors. And We shall drive the sinners to Hell like thirsty cattle driven down to water. None shall have the power of intercession but such a one as has received permission (or promise) from (Allah) Most Gracious. They say: “(Allah) Most Gracious has begotten a son!” Indeed ye have put forth a thing most monstrous! At if the skies are ready to burst the earth to split asunder and the mountains to fall down in utter ruin. For it is not consonant with the majesty of (Allah) Most Gracious that He should beget a son. Not one of the beings in the heavens and the earth but must come to (Allah) Most Gracious as a servant. He does take and account of them (all) and hath numbered them (all) exactly. And every one of them will come to him singly on the Day of Judgment.]

The paragraph below is quoted from a sermon on the subject: “Encouragement to heed the counsel and exhortations of preachers”.⁽⁸⁾

How can you neglect true religion and yet complain about the degeneracy of life? How do you hope for triumph when your fickle hearts are in defeat? You hope to find enlightenment while you continue to slumber? Why are you angry, furious and blaming others when you are the root of everything? Why do you regret this state of affairs, yet you persist in it? How can you defend your religion when you persist in your wrong doings? Why blame your brother when you follow his example? How do you intend to guide Muslims to the right path? How do you intend to restore the glory of religion? How do you hope to win the final victory?

(8) Abderrahmane al-Kamali: *Diwan al-Khutab al-'Asriyya al-Minbariyya fi al-Wa'th wa Irshad al-Bariyya*, p. 165.

The specific nature of this sermon stands out by the following aspects:

- It assigns to the listeners the responsibility of not applying the advice and exhortations given;
- It builds the sermon in the form of disapproving interrogations addressed to the audience;
- It uses assonance to give the discourse weight and aesthetics.

Reflect on another common approach to the *khutba* and sermon, to be added to the above.

Methodology of *khutba* preparation

Introduction

This section presents methodological principles and ideas for the preparation of the Friday *khutba* or sermon. Its purpose is to broaden the perspectives of building the Islamic discourse through the channel of the *khutba*. The Friday *khutba* is governed by a number of objective criteria and conditions, as well as by considerations inherent to the speaker himself.

This sum of experience, knowledge and *ijtihad* are presented to the *imams* and religious counselors to ponder and find in them material to enrich their *khutbas* and fulfill their objectives. It also seeks to fuel their enthusiasm to enhance their sermons, both in terms of methodological excellence and of efficiency and output.

▪ Particularity of the Friday *khutba*

Before we address the methodology of preparing the *khutba* and sermon, let us identify the particularities of the Friday *khutba*.

There is no doubt that the Friday sermon has the largest audience and the most profound impact on the hearts of the audience for the following reasons:

As a channel of religious discourse, it derives its sanctity from the sanctity of the Quran and the Sunnah of which the injunctions and teachings are welcomed by Muslims with profound respect and great willingness to apply them. These embody the Message that Allah conveyed to Man, complete with the commands and injunctions that represent the pivot of religion.

It is an important part of the Friday obligations. Any Muslim who is able to walk to the mosque must perform it in the proper way, listening to the two sermons preceding the two-*rak'a* prayer. The Charia insisted on the virtue of the Friday prayers and the benefit of making an early start for it.

The sanctity of the Friday *khutba* comes from its quality as a religious pointer to the importance of engaging in good deeds and avoiding sins, and reforming the actions of Muslims to continue adhering to the path of God.

This sacredness is further enhanced by the injunction to observe silence or refrain from unnecessary movement during the *khutba*. In fact, the person who asks his neighbor in prayer to be quiet during the *khutba* loses the merit of his prayer, this intervention being considered as a reprehensible act that invalidates the prayer.

The weekly occurrence of the sermon has a profound didactic impact that contributes to shaping the thinking, state of mind and behavior of Muslims, as well as their general understanding of the spirit, purposes and principles of religion. They apply this understanding in their everyday life in the form of good words and deeds if this understanding is correct, and of bad attitudes and stances if their understanding is flawed.

To these aids to attentiveness and good understanding of the sermon is added the fact that the speaker is perceived as well versed in religious sciences. His words are therefore received with an open heart and mind and no objections, particularly if he manages to win the hearts of the audience with his verve and eloquence. The mosque where the sermon is delivered has an equally profound influence on the audience's level of interaction with the speaker since it is the house of God and the purest place to receive the words of Allah and His Prophet (PBUH).

The *khutba*'s components vary according to the speaker's experience and background and his aspiration for perfection both in substance and in pitch. What are then the elements involved in developing a *khutba*?

Key elements in developing the contents of the *khutba*

- Opening words,
- Introduction,
- Highlighting the position of the topic in terms of religion,

- Citing the anomalies that has come to affect its understanding and application,
- Other content related to the topic,
- Presentation of situations and events from the biography of the Prophet, his companions and successors,
- Identification of practical obligations along with the actions desirable and those of which the negligence is reprehensible,
- Formulating the closing invocation (*du'aa*).

Methodological guidelines to addressing the topic

Opening words

In the *khutba's* opening words, the speaker begins by praising Allah and His Messenger (PBUH) in highly expressive terms and a beautiful style that appeals to the listeners and encourages them to listen attentively and with reverence. These forewords differ according to the methods adopted and purpose intended. The following are some models applicable in this regard.

First model:

Adoption of the introductory words that the Prophet (PBUH) used to start his *khutbas* with:

Abdullah Ibn Mas'oud (May Allah be pleased with him) said: "*The Prophet (PBUH) taught us how to deliver the Khutba's introductory words: Praise be to Allah, we seek His help and His forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allah from the evil of our own souls and from our bad deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides will never be led astray, and whomsoever Allah leaves astray, no one can guide. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that Mohammed is His slave and Messenger). Then he would recite the following three verses⁽⁹⁾:*

[O you who believe! Fear Allah as He should be feared, and die not except in a state of Islam (as Muslims) with complete submission to Allah.]

(9) Narrated by an-Nassai, Abu Dawoud and authenticated by al-Albani.

[O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person, and from him He created his wife, and from them both He created many men and women, and fear Allah through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship) Surely, Allah is Ever an All-Watcher over you).]

[O you who believe! Keep your duty to Allah and fear Him, and speak (always) the truth).]

Second model:

Reference is made to the topic of the sermon in the opening words.

The following introduction to the explanation of some of Allah's names is an example:

“Praise be to Allah to whom belong the most perfect attributes and the venerated names, He who created the earth and the heavens, the omnipotent and the merciful, who established Himself on the throne. I profess that there is no god besides Allah, that He has no partner, and no one has His attributes. I profess that Mohammad is His Messenger who surrendered to Him and resorted to Him in all things, small and important. Peace and blessings be on his family and his companions who have recognized the Truth by its manifestations.”⁽¹⁰⁾

Third model:

An introduction entirely crafted by the speaker.

It is preferable for the speaker to draft his own opening remarks to reflect the approach he generally adopts in all his *khutbas*, using eloquent and moving expressions that immediately catch attention and influence the listeners' hearts, as in the following opening words:

(10) Mohamed Ibn Saleh al-'Uthaymeen: *Al-Diyaa al-Llami' mina al-Khutab al-Jawami'*. 1st edition, published by al-Riassa al-'Ammah li Idarat al-Buhooth al-'Ilmiyyawa al-Iftaawa al-Daa'wa wa al-Irshad, 1408H/1988, p. 30.

First sermon

Praise be to the Almighty, the Omnipotent, whose greatness, beauty and perfection cannot be defined, who created Man from clay, infused him with His spirit, ordered the angels to bow before him, and made him a free and responsible being as well as His vice-regent on earth. He has placed in his hands the universe's bountiful resources so he can assume the obligations incumbent upon him (*Taklif*), and endure the heavy trials associated with this immense trust that neither the heavens nor the earth or the mountains managed to carry.

He who knows Allah has fathomed the secret of his own reality and the purpose of his existence, respected the rights the Creator has over him, and thus joined the ranks of the righteous and the just who deserve happiness in this world and in the hereafter. But he who turns away from Allah would have missed the purpose of his existence in this world. He shall wallow in unhappiness and live in affliction and disappointment, with none to blame save himself.

Peace and prayers be upon the Prophet, the most honored among Adam's progeny and the noblest of all creatures. We stand witness that he has fulfilled the mission and conveyed the message, that he has brought counsel to the Ummah and guided them onto the right path from which only the damned and the lost would stray.

Second sermon

Praise be to Allah who has bestowed on us the gift of Islam and placed us among the well-guided and the believers, who surrounds us with His mercy and forgiveness, to whom we turn whenever our hearts lead us astray into misguidance and disobedience as we succumb to the temptations of Satan.

Prayer and peace be on the Prophet al-Adnan, our Imam and our model on the path to Allah, the Clement and the Merciful, the path that leads us to glory in this world and eternal happiness in paradise.

Introduction: More often than not, speakers do not give due attention to the introduction. But what is the role of the introduction in the *khutba*?

The introduction plays a significant role in stimulating the audience to heed the importance and value of the topic and the extent of its relevance to some pressing and clear need, thus piquing their interest and desire to follow the *khutba* with great attentiveness.

For the introduction to garner such interest, it requires particular attention and considerable effort from the speaker if he wishes to win the trust of the audience and rally their hearts and ears.

The introduction varies according to the theme of the *khutba* and takes different forms, as can be seen from the following examples:

- Relating a disturbing incident that the *Imam* witnessed or was reported by a trustworthy source in order to present the Charia's opinion on such incident and the proper way to deal with it;
- Addressing a general or particular phenomenon observed in society or in everyday life and which has affected the way people interact with Charia teachings. In this case, it would be better to cite the source (newspaper, television, radio, book, internet, etc.) and how the ensuing phenomenon spread in society, before proceeding to its analysis;
- Tackling a specific issue about which the need for Charia advice is perceived in order to formulate an appropriate stance towards it;
- Using the present reality to raise awareness of the relevance of counsel and guidance, to ensure the proper understanding and constant presence of this advice and counsel in people's minds;

The following example is drawn from the biography of the Prophet (PBUH):
"Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) reports: "The Prophet delivered to us a sermon on the Day of Nahr (sacrifice). He said, "Do you know what is the day today?" We said, "Allah and His Apostle know better." He remained silent till we thought that he might give that day another name. He said, "Isn't it the Day of Nahr?" We said, "It is." He further asked, "Which month is this?" We said, "Allah and His Apostle know better." He remained silent till we thought that he might give it another name. He then said, "Isn't it the

month of Dhul-Hijja?" We replied: "Yes! It is." He further asked, "What town is this?" We replied, "Allah and His Apostle know it better." He remained silent till we thought that he might give it another name. He then said, "Isn't it the forbidden (Sacred) town (of Mecca)?" We said, "Yes. It is." He said, "No doubt, your blood and your properties are sacred to one another like the sanctity of this day of yours, in this month of yours, in this town of yours, till the day you meet your Lord. No doubt! Haven't I conveyed Allah's message to you? They said, "Yes." He said, "O Allah! Be witness. So it is incumbent upon those who are present to convey it (this information) to those who are absent because the informed one might comprehend it (what I have said) better than the present audience, who will convey it to him. Beware! Do not renegade (as) disbelievers after me by striking the necks (cutting the throats) of one another."⁽¹¹⁾

Highlighting the topic's position in relation to Islam: Can the position of any topic be highlighted in relation to religion? What if its importance is not such as to attract people's full attention?

This element is an important step in the process of engaging the listeners and securing the deserved attention to the sermon, so that it is well understood and that the listeners gear themselves up to implementing its contents in their practical obligations.

The speaker often uses religious texts that facilitate this purpose and position the theme in relation to religion, thus obviating the need for lengthy explanations.

A theme can always be positioned in relation to religion, but people may not know the real place a subject can hold in religion in terms of injunction or prohibition, nor its importance. In this case, the purpose of the sermon is to correct the perception the audience hold of the subject and urge them to make greater efforts to improve their actions, guided by what they have retained from the *khutba*.

If the topic falls under good morals and supererogatory duties of which the non-application does not result in a sin and the opposite brings further

(11) Narrated by the two sheikhs.

reward, the speaker will not fail to find a way to bring these commendable acts closer to people's hearts by giving the topic greater attention, linking it to the good Muslim's desire to be always closer to virtue and to seize any opportunity to gain more reward, be it small or large. It is also possible to link a moral value or praiseworthy practice to the observance of Islam's pillars, the accomplishment of its rites, perseverance in performing Charia-dictated duties and commendable acts and keeping its spirit and objectives alive and burning at all times.

Describe the aberrations resulting from misunderstanding the sermon and its application in everyday life:

Addressing the aberrations resulting from the misinterpretation and application of religion can be a sensitive subject. How can the orator achieve this without antagonizing part of the audience? Should this aspect be a constant component in the *khutba*?

This section focuses on the various dysfunctions and aberrations that affect the *khutba*'s assimilation by the people. It draws up a table of the different forms of deviation from the purposes and provisions of the Charia, and highlights the extent and gravity of these aberrations by citing the relevant texts from the Holy Quran, the Sunnah and the Prophet's biography (PBUH).

Further evidence may be necessary to prove the aberration of these dysfunctions and their incompatibility with the spirit of Islam, as well as to describe in detail their grave repercussions both in this world and in the hereafter. This evidence can be supported with real disgraceful stories from the past and the present, along with material and scientific evidence such as the testimony of *'ulemas*, writers, Muslim and non-Muslim thinkers, moralistic poems, or even statistics and other instructive data.

Describe situations and examples taken from the biography of the Prophet (PBUH), his companions and followers and other eminent men: Can this factor be considered of constant importance? Is it possible to use it for all topics?

Evoking events and examples from the biography of the Prophet (PBUH), companions, followers and reforming scholars can play a clear part in repelling perverse tendencies, chart the right path and reveal the proper way of behaving.

Indeed, the best example to be used to influence people's minds and prompt them to follow suit is the Messenger (PBUH) and his companions, or the superior human model represented by his followers and the enlightened scholars and holy men who followed in the footsteps of the Prophet. The biographies of these virtuous men abound with moral values and merits of such perfection and greatness as to entice the heart to follow suit and break the bounds of hesitation to immerse oneself in similar pursuits. Making the appropriate choice of the human model to emulate, if made from today's times and reality would have a stronger force of impact and provide more poignant and powerful arguments emulate this model.

This didactic method is firmly rooted in the Holy Quran which presents wonderful examples of righteousness and virtue, drawn from the lives of prophets, sages, and fervent believers.

Defining practical obligations and applications: How important is this element? Does every topic covered in the sermon come with its particular practical obligations?

The importance of determining practical duties, along with incentives to accomplish them and admonitions against neglecting them, lies in the fact that a *khutba's* success is measured by its ability to delineate the religious obligations arising from its topic and how it affects behavior. This allows the words conveyed in the *khutba* to take shape in actions and enables them to touch and interact with people's lives and affairs.

It also prevents the *khutba* from remaining confined to words which may have some impact on the audience, but once the latter leave the mosque, the effect may fade if it is not consolidated with actions that entrench its lasting impression on minds and hearts.

Formulating the concluding du'aa

What is the relevance of linking the final *du'aa* to the subject? And is it feasible irrespective of the subject addressed?

When formulating these final invocations, the first part must speak to the topic, praying for the success of those who aspire to rectitude and for redemption and serenity for the sinners. The second part of the invocations is generally directed at all Muslims.

For example, if dedication is the topic of the sermon, appropriate final invocations could be as follows:

Final invocation

OAllah! Help us find sincerity in our words and deeds, accomplish our prayers, fasting, charity, and our obligatory and recommended acts of worship out of dedication to You alone. Lord, guide us to be devoted to You alone and to no other partner, in every one of our actions. We aspire to nothing but to please You and a way to Paradise and deliverance from the fires of hell. Lord! Fill our hearts with sincerity and devotion to You and to all those we are summoned to be faithful to, our parents, our children, our spouses, our neighbors and our friends, as well as any Muslim with whom we have lawful relations. O Allah, forgive us if our failings and imperfections taint our devotion with the shadow of shirk (association) or if we are led astray by worldly temptations. Help us redeem our mistakes, and make our intentions, thoughts and sentiments pure and perfectly dedicated to You.

Is there anything you would like to take into account when developing your sermon and that is not covered in the above?

Sermon preparation sheet

Stages	Content
Starting phase	
Selection of subject Definition of objectives Identification of available references Determination of primary and complementary texts	
Preparation phase	
Choice of opening words Preparation of introduction Highlighting the position of the topic in relation to religion Highlighting the dysfunctions that tainted its understanding and application in daily life Selection of human examples	
Closing phase	
Definition of obligations and practical applications Preparing the <i>du'aa</i> concluding the theme Options pertaining to declamation mode	

Methodology of preparing the *khutba*

▪ Important elements in preparing the *khutba*

What are the key methodological elements necessary for the development of the *khutba*?

1. Comparison table between the methodological elements of the *khutba* and the sermon

Methodological elements	First phase	
	Khutba	Sermon
Topic	The focus here is on seasonal worship practices, occasional questions or critical deviances, reminders of forgotten obligations with a focus on appealing to sentiments.	The same issues are addressed but in a gradual manner and with a more thorough analysis, this time addressing minds and hearts.
Definition of objectives	Take into account the approach adopted, the conditions in which the address is given and	and the needs of the audience
Identification of references	Similar	
Identification of texts	Similar	
	Development phase	
Choice of opening	Is mostly constant and relatively long	Changes frequently and is generally short
Choice of introduction	May be merged with the opening to become one	Is separate from the opening and warrants greater attention
Highlighting the topic in relation to religion	This is carried out succinctly in order not to take much time	Is treated more thoroughly, especially when the exhortation sessions pertain to the same topic
Highlighting the topic in relation to religion	This is carried out succinctly in order not to take much time	Is treated more thoroughly, especially when the exhortation sessions pertain to the same topic
Highlighting the dysfunctions that have affected understanding and application in everyday life	Dysfunctions are used as an illustration if the theme is restricted to a single speech	Each exhortation session may be dedicated to addressing some form of failing in detail, explaining the Charia opinion about it, as well as its causes and grave repercussions
Selection of human examples	Time may not allow citing one or two examples, very briefly	The nature of the sermon allows the orator to cite many human stories that can be rich in lessons and noble actions

Closing phase		
Determination of practical obligations and applications	To be briefly touched on to ensure people do not forget them and strive to heed them	These must be associated with detailed evidence demonstrating their logic and methods of sound application
Preparing the du'aand wrapping up the topic	The invocations delivered at the end of the khutba relate to the theme but are also of a general nature	Emphasis is placed in these invocations on the topic, followed by very brief general invocations
Options relating to the mode of declamation	The method of declamation is adapted to each discursive type used, as will be shown later	

2. Characteristic methodological elements of the khutba

▪ Focusing on 'softeners'

This refers to content that serves to soften hearts and instill fear of God and the punishment of Judgment Day. These softeners include sterling examples of obedience to Allah's injunctions, respect for His prohibitions and adherence to the righteous path, examples that are found in abundance in the history of messengers and all the virtuous men who followed in their steps.

Attention is also given to elements that reflect one's desire to implore the forgiveness and seek the benediction of Allah, and the honor, pride, dignity and status that He reserves for the obedient in this world and glory in the eternal paradise of the afterlife.

These 'softeners' helps harpen the sense of responsibility towards the Creator and heighten Man's awareness of Allah's watchfulness, his desire to avoid His wrath, find favor with Him and seek His help, love and closeness.

▪ Adapting declamation to the situation

Thanks to its flexibility, the sermon allows adaptation to declamation requirements and to the audience's needs to correct their understanding and reform their actions.

Rather than addressing all the steps of this methodology, we will limit ourselves to the points likely to help achieve the general objectives.

After the opening words and introduction, and having underscored the importance and relevance of the topic, the misinterpretations and erroneous applications that caused it to depart from the spirit and purpose of the Charia, it may seem that these achievements have crucially important benefits and may have taken up all the time available, therefore the following stages may have to be deferred to a second, third or even a fourth sermon, depending on people's needs and the very nature of the theme being addressed. The sermon may present the exegesis of Quranic verses or *hadiths*, the exploration of certain periods of the Prophet's life (PBUH), or certain aspects of the life of the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) and the virtuous among enlightened *imams*.

A sermon can also take the form of a long moving story that requires a pause to analyze and draw lessons, or a poem with recommendations that the *Imam* endeavors to explain in order to explore its profound meanings, or a series of examples drawn from the Quran or the Sunnah, or eloquent maxims either from a single scholar, such as Ibn Ataa-Allah al-Iskandarani, or different sources.

▪ Using dialogue

The sermon can be formulated as a dialogue around a logical and obvious question stirring the listeners' desire to hear the answer and explanations. It involves the audience in the discussion by allowing them, from time to time, to share their opinions and ideas, and encouraging them to ask questions in a positive interaction between the speaker and the audience.

This necessitates profound knowledge of the subject on the part of the *imam* and an enhanced ability to share his rich knowledge.

The Messenger (PBUH) often preached to people by engaging them in dialogue, prompting them to ask questions. Abu 'Uthman narrated the following: *"I was with Salman al-Farissi under a tree. He took a dry branch from the tree and began shaking it until all leaves fell down. Then he said: "O Abu 'Uthman, won't you ask me why I did this? I said: "Why did you do it? He said: "This is what the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) did as I sat with him under a tree. He took a dry branch and shook till all its leaves fell down, then he asked me 'O Salman won't you ask me why I did it? I asked 'why*

did you do it?' He said: 'When a Muslim does his ablutions properly, then prays his five prayers, his sins will fall away from him as these leaves have fallen away.'⁽¹²⁾

This hadith will serve as an example of the didactic representation referred to later.

▪ **Appealing to hearts**

The sermon must be able to stir feelings and touch hearts rather than address reason with evidence and scientific arguments. Influencing hearts into leaning towards something creates impetus to implement it with enthusiasm, whereas a logical discourse alone cannot do it, even if the relevance of the argument and the power of persuasion are high.

Therefore, proffering evidence of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of something does not suffice as it is not per se binding to anybody in the absence of an emotional mobilization that favors acquiescence and obedience without complaint or objection.

This dual approach, addressing both the mind and the heart, is emphasized in the Quran as a form of guidance, compassion, and counsel, as is evident from the following verses:

[O ye who believe! avoid suspicion as much (as possible): for suspicion in some cases is a sin: and spy not on each other nor speak ill of each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay ye would abhor it... but fear Allah: for Allah is Oft-Returning Most Merciful.] (Al-Hujurat: 12).

[O ye who believe! intoxicants and gambling (dedication of) stones and (divination by) arrows are an abomination of Satan's handiwork: eschew such (abomination) that ye may prosper. Satan's plan is (but) to excite enmity and hatred between you with intoxicants and gambling and hinder you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer: will ye not then abstain?] (Al-Baqara: 91-90)

(12) *Musnad Ahmed*. Al-Albani categorized it in *Sahih al-Taghrib wa al-Tarhib* as good due to external factors.

[O ye who believe! what is the matter with you then when ye are asked to go forth in the cause of Allah ye cling heavily to the earth? Do ye prefer the life of this world to the hereafter? But little is the comfort of this life as compared with the hereafter.] (Tauba: 38)

The impact of this emotional discourse is further enhanced by expressing concern for the interests and wellbeing of the audience and compassion for them, addressing them with terms of affection such as 'Dearly beloved', 'Fellow believers' and 'disciples of the most honored of all creatures'.

▪ Citing examples and metaphors

Examples and metaphors are a great tool in clarifying obscure ideas and retaining unfamiliar notions. They also entertain the imagination by connecting abstract meanings with known natural phenomena. They help keep the lessons learned immiscible in the mind, serve as a constant reminder, and be shared and exchanged, thus spreading the morality behind them in society.

This method is adopted in the Quran and the Sunnah, as well as in literature, whether prose or poetry. The following are a few examples of this:

In the Quran:

[The parable of those who spend their substance in the way of Allah is that of a grain of corn: it groweth seven ears and each ear hath a hundred grains. Allah giveth manifold increase to whom He pleaseth; and Allah careth for all and He knoweth all things.] (Al-Baqara: 261).

In the Sunnah:

The Prophet (PBUH) said: *"The likeness of the man who observes the limits prescribed by Allah and that of the man who transgresses them is like the people who get on board a ship after casting lots. Some of them are in its lower deck and some of them in its upper (deck). Those who are in its lower (deck), when they require water, go to the occupants of the upper deck, and say to them: 'If we make a hole in the bottom of the ship, we shall not harm you.' If they (the occupants of the upper deck) leave them to carry out their design they all will be drowned. But if they do not let them go ahead (with their plan), all of them will remain safe."*⁽¹³⁾

(13) Al-Bukhari, al-Tirmidi and Ahmed.

3. Guidelines from the fiqh of exhortation

▪ Addressing people with what may reform them

Part of the *imam's* experience and knowledge of human nature is to share with his audience what he hopes would be safe and beneficial to them, and not everything he knows. He chooses what is suitable for the audience and likely to reform and redress their conditions. Furthermore, he must not speak excessively of the punishment in store for their sins to avoid causing them despair of Allah's forgiveness and mercy. He must not either emphasize Allah's immense leniency and generous retribution for actions, however modest they may be, lest the listeners take too much pride in their deeds and become imbued with arrogance. He should act with acumen either way, tuning in onto what he senses to be most needed and best suited for their current circumstances.

The meaning should not be so superior and esoteric as to become exclusive to a select few, nor should it be too mundane as to fall in the purview of the general public. The worth of an idea lies in being correct, and its benefit lies in being most suited to the state of affairs, for every situation calls for its own words.

Al-Bayan wa al-Tabyine, al Jahiz

In the meantime, he must observe the expressions on their faces, looks and level of interest in his sermon and, using his sense of deduction, decide whether to continue or summarize what is still to come. If need be, he can convey to them the concern and interest he takes in their comfort and the time they have. Does he elevate the level of the discourse or should he summarize and simplify it? If he is unable to detect the direction of his next move, then he must try to find out their position in a gracious way that reflects his attention to their comfort and his concern for their time.

Addressing His Messenger, Allah (SWT) said: [***Therefore give admonition in case the admonition profits (the hearer).***] (*Al-A'ala*: 9). Giving admonition is therefore conditional upon its benefit. In other words, the admonition can become harmful if it is intended to chastise, remonstrate with people or expose their faults with unkind words.

IbnMassoud (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: “*The Prophet (PBUH) chose for his sermons an appropriate time so that we would not get bored.*”⁽¹⁴⁾

The speaker may tackle a minor issue without carefully choosing his words and ideas, causing boredom and disappointment among the audience. Even worse, his words may lead to division and dissension, after which it may prove difficult to calm spirits and redress the situation thus created.

Hemay quote an ambiguous Quranic text or a *hadith* in the course of his address, but fail to provide an interpretation to remove all confusion, thus unwittingly creating a conundrum for some of the audience. The preacher must avoid addressing matters of which he lacks proper knowledge. If he finds himself venturing into uncharted terrain, he should be able to extricate himself from this embarrassing situation. He should have no shame in acknowledging that he needs to revisit his knowledge of some matter, after which he would address it anew.

▪ **Preaching by example: deeds before words**

The more righteous the actions and attitude of the preacher are, the better he serves as a model for those who look up to him and interact with him. He is more likely to win the affection and respect of the people, boost their confidence in his religious stature and goodwill, before and after speaking to them. His sermons would thus be received with wide open hearts and equally alert minds.

When people see him, they are reminded of Allah and are infused by a sense of tranquility and faith. When he has reached this state, even a few words, spoken without emphasis or much research, would penetrate their minds and leave a positive and profound impact on them.

One such model is the Messenger (PBUH) who left a deep impression on everyone who saw him, smiling or silent, sitting or standing, walking or talking, before he even preached the word of God and spoke of the Quran.

This particular quality resulted from the open-mindedness, humility, perseverance and patience he displayed with people who were discourteous or irreverent

(14) *Sahih Al-Bukhari*.

among the audience. It is also the result of his earnestness, his devotion to Allah, and the love he inspired in them, as well as his preoccupation with guiding them and bringing them the joy of faith both in this world and in the next: [***Now hath come unto you an apostle from amongst yourselves: it grieves him that ye should perish: ardently anxious is he over you: to the believers is he most kind and merciful.***] (*At-Tauba*: 128)

▪ **First among the audience: The preacher himself**

The success or failure of a preacher depend on the effect that his own sermon has on him. He must therefore consider himself his own target audience and understand that his need for the exhortation is no lesser than the need of others. The first focus of his energy and advice is himself as he endeavors to comply with and carry out the responsibilities and obligations he advocates. It also depends on his willingness to reject immoral actions and thoughts that may lead him astray, and the extent to which he can associate words with actions. He must, moreover, steer clear of self-aggrandizement on account of his work and knowledge, and place himself instead in the hands of Allah, praying that He does not leave him to his own devices and temptations, not even for the blink of an eye. This would heighten his sense of humility, self-consciousness, evaluation and correction.

What he advises people to do constitutes an argument against him more than against the audience, for he will only be rewarded for the good counsel he dispenses if he is more resolutely determined to apply the same advice and strive to stay on the path of the righteous.

The following expressions are some of the best examples a preacher can use in this regard:

- "I urge you and myself to fear Allah Almighty";
- [***O my people! see ye whether I have a Clear (Sign) from my Lord and He hath given me sustenance (pure and) good as from Himself? I wish not in opposition to you to do that which I forbid you to do. I only desire (your) betterment to the best of my power; and my success (in my task) can only come from Allah: in Him I trust and unto Him I look***];

- Address the audience as one of them, as in the following example:
“We are enjoying the material gains of this world and have immersed ourselves in them. Alas! We have forgotten that we will be accountable on the Day of Judgment as we stand before Allah.”

▪ **No despairing of people’s receptivity**

The preacher must be careful not to lose hope in reforming people; otherwise he would cease to give good counsel and consider his office as a mere source of livelihood, losing interest in researching his reference sources to create appealing and well-crafted sermons. When this happens, the preacher’s words become hollow and meaningless, falling short of touching hearts and mobilizing minds around reform and righteousness.

In truth, the responsibility of reforming people’s conduct does not rest with the preacher. Such responsibility is incumbent upon each and everyone towards himself and towards the Creator. Exhortation has been instituted to provide an argument against people’s actions so that they may not claim ignorance or lack of understanding of divine laws. The Quran says on many occasions that the messengers’ duty is to deliver the divine message; as for actual guidance, it is the prerogative of the message recipients that they must exercise in all freedom and responsibility. ***[It is not required of thee (O Apostles) to set them on the right path but Allah sets on the right path whom He pleaseth.]*** (Al-Baqara, 272)

Moreover, people’s interaction with the divine word differs from one individual to the next. There are those who react quickly and others who are slow to respond. But the results will sooner or later be seen, and if evil is not annihilated, it will at least be mitigated and its repercussions made lighter.

Are there other factors that can improve the content and delivery of the sermon?

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY OF *KHUTBA* AND SERMON DECLAMATION

Key elements in building the sermon's content

There is no doubt that a good *khutba* must follow a clear methodology where various skills and forms of expertise meet, both in terms of elaboration and declamation. Practice has proven the effectiveness of these qualities and of experience in raising the level of the discourse and heightening its influence on minds. What are the components of this proposed methodology?

Delivery phase is the most crucial phase after *khutba* preparation as it seeks to reach hearts through ears, to pique the audience's interest and understanding, to stimulate their senses and bring them to invoke Allah, obey His commands and heed His prohibitions. The *khutba* strives to enhance people's faith and their certainty that Allah watches over them, boost their determination to remain obedient to Him and their indefectible repentance to be worthy of His mercy and forgiveness.

The speaker's personality is a key factor in the delivery process. The higher his awareness of his responsibility in conveying the message using all his faculties and abilities, the better he will be at accomplishing his mission. His sermon will be beneficial, impactful and able to alter the thoughts and reform the behavior of the audience.

The *Imam* needs to be knowledgeable about the practical aids and technologies that can help improve his delivery.

Many *imams* are successful in preparing a sermon that is rich in content, very relevant to people's circumstances and well-written, yet they take little interest in the techniques and art of delivery. As a result, they are unable to draw the attention of listeners and make their words easily and smoothly touch their hearts.

How should orators prepare themselves to deliver their *khutbas* and sermons for a more profound impact on people?

Preparatory steps to be completed before speech delivery

- Express the intention to serve Allah alone and determination to provide good counsel to all Muslims;
 - Have a true appreciation of the importance of the mission of conveying the message;
 - Be mindful of the audience's assimilation abilities;
 - Have a good understanding of the topic of the sermon/*khutba*, along with good preparation and formulation.
-
- **Express the intention to serve Allah alone and determination to provide good counsel to Muslims:** The impact of a speech on the listener gains in importance as the gap between the delivered content and the morals of the declaimer shrinks. The Prophet Shu'ayb was determined to draw his people's attention to this condition: [***He said: "O my people! see ye whether I have a Clear (Sign) from my Lord and He hath given me sustenance (pure and) good as from Himself? I wish not in opposition to you to do that which I forbid you to do. I only desire (your) betterment to the best of my power; and my success (in my task) can only come from Allah: in Him I trust and unto Him I look.***] (*Hud*: 88)

Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, may Allah have mercy on him, wrote: "*Immoral scholars sit at the gates of Heaven, calling people to paradise with their words, but inviting them to the pits of hell with their actions. If they uttered the word 'Come!', their actions said 'Do not listen to them'. If what they preached was true, they would have been the first to heed it. They are guides by appearance, but highway men in disguise*".

(*Al-Fawa'id*, page 61, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiya

In another example, Imam Hassan al-Basri was called upon by slaves to talk about their enfranchisement and to encourage people to do so. He postponed the sermon for a month, enough time to raise money to free a slave. Then he addressed the people inviting them to imitate him, which had a highly favorable effect on the crowds.

It is in human nature to resist those who call for virtuous good deeds until they are convinced that the speaker's words are a reflection on his own actions, and that he is not only performing the paid duty of addressing people and raising awareness about religious issues when his behavior speaks another language or is difficult to reconcile with his words.

The speaker must therefore intimate his own interaction with his speech or sermon in such a way as to embody the actions or recommendations contained in this speech. As listeners observe him, they find in his actions an incentive to be attentive to his words then and to their subsequent application.

▪ **Have a true appreciation of the significance of conveying the message:**

Why is the preacher's appreciation of the weight of his mission featuring at the top of preparations for the *khutba* sermon declamation?

For the preacher or speaker, to appreciate the weight of the duty of transmission, giving good counsel and lighting the way to Allah is his strongest impetus to aim for an excellent sermon, both in elaboration and declamation, but to also improve it now and then until it reaches the highest degrees of persuasion and force of impact. He would thus guarantee his success in the task entrusted to prophets and those who followed in their footsteps among the scholars, *du'ats* and men of virtue.

The sense of responsibility that the transmission of God's Message to His Creation implies has always been a matter of concern to all who had to carry it. Moses (peace be with him) who was instructed by Allah to speak to Pharaoh who considered himself a god, was afraid of failing in his mission and pleaded for Allah's help.

[Go thou to Pharaoh for he had indeed transgressed all bounds. (Moses) said: "O my Lord! expand me my breast. Ease my task for me. And remove the impediment from my speech. So they may understand what I say: And give me a Minister from my family, Aaron my brother. Add to my strength through him. And make him share my task.] (Ta-Ha: 32-24).

The preacher's concern with conveying the message out of devotion to Allah and not for some worldly gain guides him towards success in this mission, to lead the hesitant and establish evidence for all people. The Charia repeatedly warned against the pitfalls of making light of the duty of conveying

the message or of deviating from its noble purpose: [***And remember Allah took a Covenant from the People of the Book to make it known and clear to mankind and not to hide it; but they threw it away behind their backs and purchased with it some miserable gain! and vile was the bargain they made!***] (Al 'Imran: 187). Abu Huraira reports this *hadith* of the Prophet (PBUH): “*The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: ‘Whoever acquires knowledge through which Allah’s satisfaction is gained, but only acquires it for worldly gains, will not smell the fragrance of Paradise on the Day of Resurrection.’*”⁽¹⁵⁾ Ibn ‘Omar, may Allah be pleased with him, quoted this other *hadith*: “*Whoever seeks knowledge in order to argue with the fools, show off before the knowledgeable, or attract people’s attention, shall languish in hell.*”⁽¹⁶⁾

- **To be mindful of the audience’s assimilation abilities:** How important is it to take into account the listeners’ level of assimilation, and how to recognize it?

The degree of a speaker’s success in influencing the minds of his audience depends, on the one hand, on their degree of assimilation of his words and, on the other hand, on their desire to learn and be guided. Neglecting this aspect can have a negative impact that may hinder the process of conveying the message entrusted to *imams* and preachers and which they must accomplish regardless of circumstances.

Imam al-Bukhari reports, in the chapter *On the one who dispenses knowledge to some but excludes others for fear that they may not understand*, Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “*Convey to the people what they can understand! Would you prefer Allah and His Messenger to be disbelieved?*” Abdullah Ibn Massoud also reported: “*If you speak of matters that are beyond people’s understanding, your words may be a source of turmoil for some of these people.*”⁽¹⁷⁾

These repercussions may include misinterpretation of what is said, leading to the creation of erroneous or even unlawful behavioral situations.

(15) Abu Dawud, An-Nassai and Ahmed, authenticated by al-Albani.

(16) Reported by Ibn Majah. Al-Albani classified it as authentic due to external factors.

(17) Narrated by Muslim.

People may also stop listening because of the esoteric nature of the speech or the difficulty of grasping its substance and purpose.

The preacher may determine the best assimilation level of the audience by questioning some of them who would be representative of its different categories.

- **To have a good understanding of the topic addressed:** What is to be gained from a good understanding of the sermon after its good crafting? How to achieve such understanding?

After careful crafting of the address, the speaker must re-read it several times in order to anchor the text in his memory and be able to read it out with ease and without visible discomfort, by referring to flash cards on which the reference texts or key points are marked, or even by improvising the entire speech on delivery.

It goes without saying that the more the speaker is familiar with his subject and its components, the higher his self-confidence. He is more able to interact with the substance and influence the listeners. The listeners' attention to his words grows as does their keenness to maximize the benefit of the sermon, having no obvious doubts about his understanding of the subject he chose to address, about the accuracy of his opinions and the correctness of his deductions.

A good delivery goes hand in hand with a good crafting of the sermon and enhances the speaker's ability to present the subject with optimal clarity. He is thus able to deliver his speech without confusion or hesitation and to harness his speech to meet his objectives

The speaker's mastery of the sermon and his utter conviction of its importance for people's lives are a crucial factor in his ability to convince them. This is furthered by the speaker's understanding of his text and how he exudes mastery of the subject.

It is obvious that the degree of assimilation always hinges on the personality of the speaker and how the audience regards his state, traits of character and capacities: [***And speak to them a word to reach their very souls. Tell them about themselves convincing words.***] (*An-Nissaa*: 63).

The speaker ensures his own understanding of his speech by adopting one of the following two methods:

- Jotting down key points along with the supportive texts in which he may stumble or that he could misquote;
- Carrying out several private rehearsals of the speech, possibly using a recorder to identify the difficulties he might encounter, and try to overcome them until he is assured of his full mastery in the moments preceding the speech delivery.

Additions during the presentation of the speech

What are the additions that the preacher/speaker can introduce during his delivery?

The speaker must first adapt his prepared speech/sermon to the psychological and social state of the audience and ensure that it speaks to the problems that preoccupy them. He must also use various methods and techniques during the presentation.

Indeed, when the speaker manages to purge the sermon from his personal imprint and the circumstances that conditioned him, and the more he adapts his address to the psychology of the listeners and their general condition, the closer he will be to guaranteeing the benefits of his sermon and helping the audience reflect its contents onto their everyday life.

The following steps determine the speaker's areas of intervention in the previously crafted sermon/speech:

- Opening words and highlighting the importance of the topic,
 - Preserving the unity of the theme,
 - Taking interest in the language of communication,
 - Paying attention to suspense elements.
-
- **Opening words and highlighting the importance of the topic**
- What does the preacher/speaker do in the opening phase and how does he highlight the importance of the topic?**

A successful and effective opening is the result of a spontaneous and smooth interaction between the listeners and the lecture they are attending. A good

opening manages to free the listeners from their worries and eases them into the lecture's atmosphere, creating a strong and unshakeable bond between the two parties.

To devise a creative opening at the very last moment is not an easy feat or within everyone's reach as it requires much talent and intuition. Alternatively, the safest way is to resort to the opening words drafted during the sermon preparation.

▪ **Preserving the unity of the theme**

How to preserve the unity of the theme?

This is achieved through a good preparation of the lecture/*khutba*, as well as the clear definition of its objectives, contents and other aspects. If the speaker improvises his speech or resorts to the use of cards, and whilst busy delivering his lecture, he may be struck by new ideas or matters of great current concern without previous planning. In this case, he may have to integrate them into his speech without prior preparation, which requires a good deal of self-discipline and great dexterity.

The more the lecture relates to everyday life, the easier it is to interact with and assimilate. The human soul tends in fact to be more preoccupied with current events and problems, prone to constantly ponder the challenges they represent and aspire to be free from their shackles.

Thus, it is as important to preserve the coherence of the theme as it is to direct it towards the achievement of objectives, thus helping listeners to better grasp it and benefit from it.

▪ **Attention to the language of communication**

What does attention to the language of communication mean?

Language is the mainstay of communication between the speaker and his audience. Through language, the message is transmitted from mouth to ear. Great attention should then be paid to language to ensure that it is clear and comprehensible, unambiguous and standing in the middle ground between the overformal style that may give rise to many interpretations and misconceptions, and the mediocre style that strips words of their lofty

meanings and expressions. The Almighty says in this regards: [***We sent not an apostle except (to teach) in the language of his (own) people, in order to make (things) clear to them. Now Allah leaves straying those whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases: and He is Exalted in power, full of Wisdom.***] (*Ibrahim*: 4).

Good communication requires that language be adapted to the level of the audience, sometimes in classical Arabic, other times in more simplified Arabic, or a combination of Arabic and a foreign language, or even entirely in the foreign language, depending on the conditions of the target community.

Make sure your enunciation is graceful, gentle, dignified and flowing, and the meaning is clear and understandable by all, whether your speech addresses a particular group or the public in general.

(*Al-Bayan wa al-Tabyine*, Al-Jahiz).

What is crucial is to remove all barriers to communication and manage to convey the noble message. The *Imam* must however strive to accustom his audience to appreciating classical Arabic, understanding and loving it and making every effort to learn the language of the Quran as a symbol of their love for the Holy Quran and the sacred position in which they hold it.

▪ Elements of suspense

Which suspense elements deserve attention?

The process of stimulating listeners is of great importance in that it triggers their responsiveness and combines the benefits of the lecture/speech with the pleasure taken in attending it, while preserving it from boredom and monotony. In this respect, the following factors should be considered:

- o Starting with a good opening and an attractive introduction,
- o Displaying a jovial face when in front of the public,
- o Addressing people with gentleness and kindness,
- o Presenting every new idea in the form of an answer to a question,
- o Repeating key expressions that are central to the speech,
- o Putting the tone of the voice to the best use,
- o Using creative speech enhancers such as:

- Interacting with the theme,
- Incorporating moving stories,
- Using poetry and eloquent maxims,
- Improvising the sermon/speech,
- Avoiding a lengthy lecture/sermon,
- Breaking the monotony of the lecture/speech if lengthy,
- Presenting regular and final conclusions.

▪ **Starting with a good opening and an attractive introduction,**

How to produce a good opening and an attractive introduction?

A good opening, with an attractive introduction, can be presented in the form of a dilemma or a question that piques the listeners' interest and their anticipation for the answer. The Messenger (PBUH) adopted this method in many of his *hadiths* so that he rarely delivered his address without first arousing the audience's curiosity. We can mention in this regard the example that Abu Huraira reports: *"The Prophet once asked his Companions, "Do you know who the true bankrupt is?" The Companions said, "A bankrupt is the one who has neither dirham (money) nor wealth." The Prophet said, "The bankrupt among my Ummah is he who would come on the Day of Judgment with prayers, fasting, and zakah; but he had offended one person, slandered another, devoured others' wealth, shed the blood of this person, and beat that person. Each one of these people would be given some of the wrongdoer's good deeds. If his good deeds fall short of settling the account, then their sins will be taken from their accounts and thrown into his account, and he would be thrown in the Hellfire."*⁽¹⁸⁾

▪ **Showing a friendly face to the public**

How important is meeting the audience with a jovial face and how to maintain this demeanor?

A radiant face leaves a positive impression on people since it projects affection and joy at meeting them and endeavoring to share everything that is beneficial

(18) Narrated by Muslim and al-Tirmidi.

to them. Such jovial disposition also projects great human qualities such as the absence of arrogance, rancor and hatred, as well as contentment, nobility of spirit, serenity and happiness, among other qualities.

When the gaze falls on a joyful face, a sense of inner joy settles in. The beholder is filled with hope and good faith in the person. The listener becomes more ready to listen and more receptive to the good counsel and instructions.

A listener may in fact find greater emotional comfort and benefit by looking at the speaker's than he would benefit intellectually from the address itself.

The *Imam* must not withhold his pleasant and congenial demeanor from the people as this congeniality is considered a form of charity. Abu Dharr reports a *hadith* in which the Messenger (PBUH) said: "*Your smile in the face of fellow Muslims is a form of charity.*"⁽¹⁹⁾

A poet once said:

*If in smiles you come to him
Tis as if you gave what you came to ask*

Another poet said:

*The sight of you in happiness
Fills me, O Abu Bakr, with utter gratitude*

It is in Man's nature to follow what the eye sees. If one sees a smiling face, one's heart opens up and the happiness is shared, and if one sees someone in pain, the pain is shared as well. If one cries out of fear of Allah and the torment of hell, the natural inclination is to feel moved as well and share the tears. So the *Imam* must know how to put to the best use this psychological bond to make his audience share his feelings and perceptions.

▪ How to address people with gentle words and kindness?

Gentleness and kindness infuse contentment and hope into the hearts of people, and prevent the guilt or despair they may feel about their redemption.

(19) *Sahih Ibn Habbane*. Also mentioned by al-Tirmidi as part of a longer *hadith* and authenticated by al-Albani.

They equally play a part in strengthening faith in God and in religion and convincing the listeners of the rewards awaiting true believers. Such approach also prevents them from leaning towards over-zeal or exaggeration in analyzing any abnormal phenomenon, and helps maintain the just balance in addressing any sensitive matter.

To achieve this, the preacher may begin by blaming himself personally, implicitly addressing the listener, saying for example: *Why do we not fear God, obey His commands and avoid prohibitions, etc.?*

In the following divine verse, this approach is used when narrating the story of a man exhorting his people to believe in God: [***It would not be reasonable in me if I did not serve Him Who created me, and to Whom ye shall (all) be brought back.***] (*Ya-Sin: 22*).

The speaker must also avoid using expressions that glorify the person such as the pronoun 'I', or to highlight it with phrases such as 'in my opinion', or 'in my experience', or 'I conclude', etc.

In contrast, he must resort to expressions that denote humility and the attribution of knowledge to its initiators, such as: "for the observer, it would seem that ...", or "it might be wise to say ...", or other expressions that convey the sense of modesty and self-abnegation.⁽²⁰⁾

This is how the preacher/speaker can be successful in bringing Allah and religion closer to people and rallying their hearts around him in affection, esteem and trust in his knowledge and insightfulness, embracing his words as the source of righteousness and reform.

▪ **How to present new ideas in the form of an answer to a question?**

Presenting a new idea in the form of an answer to a question reveals the need to discover and understand this idea. It has the advantage of arousing the interest of the listeners as well as their desire to attentively follow the address to the end and understand it well.

(20) See Mohamed Ibn Ibrahim al-Hamad: ***Adab al-Maw'idhah***. 1st edition, 1421H. Dar Ibn Khuzaima li INashr wa al-Tawzi'.

Example:

O people, fear Allah and appreciate the abundance of His blessings. The Prophet (PBUH) said: *“The son of Adam will not move from before Allah until he is asked about five things: how he lived his life, how he used his youth, with what means did he earn his wealth, how did he spend his wealth, and what did he do with his knowledge”*. All of us Muslims will be answerable about these five matters, as the truthful one has told us. So let everyone ponder where he stands and how he will answer this question. He who says *“O Allah, I have spent my life in obedience to You, expended my youth and strength in serving you, endeavored to repent my sins and my disobedience, I have earned my money in lawful ways and avoided illicit gain that brings nothing but loss and perdition, I have spent my money on things that please You and refrained from spending it on debauchery. I was not miserly in zakat and other prescribed ways of spending, I gave what was due and recognized charity and engaged in it, I recognized evil and steered clear of it...”*, let this person receive the glad tidings of Allah’s mercy and the guarantee of salvation and access to paradise and Allah’s benediction. He who says I have spent my life and my youth in sins and vagaries, had no qualms about illicit and forbidden gains, cheating and betrayal, discerned good from evil yet did not benefit from this knowledge, nor did this knowledge enrich me or my understanding. That is the servant who lost his way among the astray and chose the path of the transgressors. How lamentable when the young man regrets his youth and the old man is exposed as he holds his book, and what regrets for the neglectful when the pious are brought before Allah in delegations, and the oppressors are dragged to hell, thirsty, having no intercession except those who have taken a covenant with the Merciful, calling out to Malik [***O Malik! would that thy Lord put an end to us!” He will say “Nay but ye shall abide!” “Our Lord! bring us out of this: if ever we return (to evil) then shall we be wrongdoers indeed!” “He will say: “Be ye driven into it (with ignominy)! and speak ye not to Me!”*** May Allah bless you and me with the Holy Qur’an.⁽²¹⁾

(21) *Al-Fawakih al-Shahiyya fi al-Khutab al-Minbariyya*, Vol 1, page 77.

- **This is one level of using the question/answer technique. Can you reformulate the passage differently?**

Is there an interest in repeating certain key expressions in the *khutba*?

The repetition of certain key expressions in the address is instrumental in anchoring them in the listeners' minds and serves as a key to understanding, assimilating and remembering. The repetition may take different aspects and formulations so that the meaning is embedded in minds. This method makes it possible to concentrate the message into a single sentence or expression by giving it special status, infusing it with a flame that keeps burning for a long time in minds, senses and actions.

This didactic method is very common in the Holy Quran which repeats certain expressions many times in the same surah, such as the thirty-one repetitions of the phrase [***Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?***] in *Ar-Rahman*.

The sermons of the Prophet (PBUH) also followed this principle. Al-Bukhari reports on the authority of Abdurrahman Ibn Abi Bakra on the authority of his father: *"The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "Shall I tell you of the worst cardinal sins? Worshipping others with Allah, showing disrespect to parents, giving a false statement, and testifying to the truth of a falsehood," and he kept repeating it until we were telling ourselves he would never stop."*

- **What its meant by an optimal use of tone of voice?**

A good utilization of tone involves raising the voice sometimes and lowering it at others, as well as pausing to prepare people for what will follow. This method was adopted by the Messenger (PBUH) in his teachings. Bashir Ibn Sa'd said: *"O Messenger of Allah! Allah has commanded us to supplicate for you, but how should we do that?" The Messenger (PBUH) kept silent. We were much perturbed over his silence and we wished he had not asked him this question. The Messenger (PBUH) said: "Say: O Allah! Send Your Salah (Grace, Honor and Mercy) on Mohammed and his family, as You sent Your Salah on the family of Ibrahim. O Allah! Send Your Blessings on Mohammed and his family, as You sent Your Blessings on the family of Ibrahim. For You are the Most Praiseworthy, the Most Gracious) and the method of greeting (i.e., Salam) is as you know."* (***Al-Muattaa***).

Moderation is always to be observed when diversifying the tone as it must be neither annoying and repulsive, nor inaudible to listeners. Moreover, the tempo must be sedate; neither too slow nor too fast so the listeners can follow easily. It is equally important to make sure that the microphone is correctly set and placed at the appropriate distance for the sound level to be acceptable and easily heard.

It is equally acceptable to raise the voice at certain phrases so as to bring them clearly to the listeners' attention to convey the prominent place these phrases hold in the speech. This is customarily done during Quran recitation when different techniques are used and special attention is paid to good articulation, voice oscillations and other variations such as *mad*, *ghunna*, *qalqala*, *ikhfaa*, *idgham* and others.

▪ **Why and how to integrate moving stories?**

The human being is always attracted to stories that tell real or imaginary events. Stories have a strong impact whether they are an eyewitness account or a virtual story that is connected in some way to reality.

Man is equally drawn to the illustrated idea which takes shape through a series of events and dynamic situations that make its meanings clearer and easier to be etched in minds. Such images bridge the gap between thought and reality and ensure uninterrupted attention to the subject at hand.

▪ **What is the benefit of using poetry and maxims?**

A story is not a mere logical sequence of events. It embodies values and heroic stances. A story brings a person quicker to visualization and to breaking the barriers of incapacity and hesitation and releasing the potential of acting in confidence and enthusiasm.

Considering the crucial importance of story-telling in the art of speech delivery, stories should be incorporated as often as possible in every speech or sermon to enhance their impact and raise their aesthetic appeal. The *Imam* may keep a record of poignant stories or their sources, sorted by subject, and consult this record to choose the stories best suited for his *khutbas*.

Poetry is an expression of the sentiments and thoughts of the poets. This class of sensitive people can be considered as Man's mouthpiece and

the true translator of his passions, sufferings, aspirations and ambitions. If the Muslim's spirit is imbued with the faith of Islam, he would formulate its teachings in a beautiful poetic form that stirs the desire to listen to it with anticipation and serenity and as it becomes engraved in hearts, help the listeners understand and assimilate these teachings and act according to the guidelines and lessons embedded in them.

Maxims summarize in a few words the most profound and impactful sermon and encapsulate behavior and morality rules, at the same time revealing the laws that Allah decreed for the universe. Thus, they facilitate the understanding of Charia and its precepts while impressing the listener by the solidity of their argumentation, the accuracy of facts and the coherence of their logic.

In view of their brevity, maxims are quickly etched in memory, becoming easier to remember and derive inspiration from as Man goes through the turpitudes of life.

When the sources of guidance and morality coalesce, and when their expressions take myriad forms, from the Quran and Sunnah to stories, poetry and maxims, the discourse acquires a greater force of impact on hearts and minds and an enhanced ability to alter conditions and to guide.

FORMS OF DELIVERY				
Method	Explanation	Pros	Cons	Evaluation
Writing up the subject	Full delivery from paper with no improvisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Avoidance of forgetfulness and lapses ▪ Avoidance of discomposure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inability to adjust the speech. ▪ Reliance on the written text. ▪ Weakens the rapport with the audience and the extent of impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not the most favored method in view of its weak impact. ▪ Acceptable from a novice in his early stages.
Remaining attached to the axes of the topic and some of its sources	Jotting down a few points and guiding notes and referring to them when needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keeping in control at all times ▪ Acceptable deviation from fully written sermon. ▪ More attuned to the audience. ▪ Adaptation of ideas according to the audience's state. ▪ Safety from deviation from the axes of the speech. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confusion when improvising. ▪ Difficulty of controlling the written text ▪ Forgetting some points. ▪ Difficulty in time keeping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preferred method, more impactful.
Improvisation	Delivery with no paper support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As mentioned with method 1. ▪ Greater appreciation on the part of the audience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Forgetting some elements. ▪ Difficulty in managing time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Optimal method in view of its great impact and spontaneity.

▪ What is the benefit of improvising the sermon/speech?

The best way of delivering a speech is improvisation after clearly assimilating it, taking note of the broad lines and recording the corresponding texts. As the audience follows the speaker's gaze as he delivers his sermon, communication is established permanently, as much visually as in reflection and emotion. By looking in various directions, the preacher keeps the spiritual connection between the audience and his theme, thus making it easier for them to follow the sermon.

A part from the good-natured disposition and modulating the tone of voice, using body language means also using facial expressions in ways that reflect genuine interaction with the gist of the sermon, using hand gestures and looking in different directions to project the wish to include all in the speech and give them equal attention. Jaber Ibn Abdullah reports that "*When Allah's Messenger (PBUH) delivered the khutba (sermon), his eyes became red, his voice rose, and his anger increased so that he was like one giving a warning against the enemy and saying: "The enemy has made a morning attack on you, and in the evening too."* He would also say: "*The last Hour and I have been sent like these two,*" and he (PBUH) would join his forefinger and middle finger."⁽²²⁾ (Muslim).

▪ What are the drawbacks of a lengthy khutba/sermon?

A lengthy *khutba*/sermon, or one that is too brief to be beneficial, can have negative repercussions on the degree of responsiveness.

The Messenger (PBUH) stands out as the best example in this regard. Aisha, may God be pleased with her, tells us that the Prophet (PBUH) was parsimonious and sparing in words. She also said: "*The Messenger (PBUH) did not speak at length as you do.*"⁽²³⁾

In these fast times of preoccupations and busy schedules, people can no longer waste time on long speeches when a shorter address can be just as effective.

(22) Narrated by Muslim.

(23) Narrated by Muslim.

Mankind had never heard before words as far-reaching in benefit, as concise in words, as balanced in weight, as beautiful in style, as noble in goal, as resonant in effect, as smooth in delivery, as eloquent in meaning or as powerful in gist as the Prophet's words.

(Al-Jahiz, *Al-Bayan wa al-Tabyine*)

If the speaker avoids unnecessary digressions and focuses his address within 15-25 minutes, he would finish it while people are still wishing for more, rather than plod on till boredom sets in and people start wishing he would conclude.

Let us be inspired by the Messenger (PBUH), the recipient of the Revelation to whom Allah has granted the wisdom and ability of good judgment. He (PBUH) limited himself to concise and concentrated sermons, without prolixity but also without prejudicial brevity.⁽²⁴⁾

▪ How to break the monotony of a lengthy sermon?

The listener's attention is usually at its peak at the beginning of the address, and begins to gradually wane until concentration fades entirely and the individual falls into a kind of torpor where everything becomes muddled and information may turn into its total opposite. The speaker must be mindful of this problem and endeavor to mitigate its impact on the communication between speaker and listener.

One way of breaking this monotony, if the sermon's length is unavoidable, is to incorporate an anecdote or an entertaining story to relax the atmosphere, reinvigorate the mind and capture once again the attention of people from the clutches of weariness or boredom.

▪ How important is making periodic conclusions?

There is no doubt that presenting conclusions at regular intervals and at the end of each axe addressed, and a general conclusion at the end of the lecture/*khutba*, has its importance. These conclusions enable the audience

(24) *Al-Bayan wa al-Tabyine*, *al-Jahiz*, Vol. I, p. 124.

to verify what they have retained, as well as to better understand the rest and proceed ahead. They also provide the distracted with an opportunity to reconnect with the thread of the address.

▪ **How should the preacher/speaker end his address?**

At the end of the address, the preacher/speaker provides a brief summary of the content, along with a review of the practical and didactic benefits that can be derived from it.

This guarantees a minimum level of assimilation and benefit for the audience and for those who, for some reason, missed the lecture. They are able to catch up at the end and grasp the key points of what has been said.

Defining didactic benefits gives the audience the practical sum of the lecture/speech and brings them face to face with the responsibility of their practical application.

Barring this approach, people would be prone to forgetting the topic addressed. And when per chance they do remember, it is only some snippets that may serve them in a conversation but not for implementation. It is in fact the fate of words that fall short of clear actual commitments to inevitably fade as the listener plunges back into his daily business.

Indeed, the individual hears, reads or learns much at school or university, but only what find its way to implementation can truly be said to be useful.

▪ **What are the differences in delivery between a khutba and a sermon?**

Element of delivery	<i>Khutba</i>	Sermon
Time keeping	Its duration does not allow lengthiness	May take more than one hour in delivery
Clarification tools	Limited to gesturing with fingers, hands, a cane and using facial expressions...	Allows for the use of more aids such as retro projectors, using different gestures, producing documents and using other tools...
Style of dialogue	Limited to the monologue, asking and answering questions or narration.	Open to a direct dialogue with the audience and to inviting comments and questions.
Resorting to humor	Allows for very little humor, if at all.	May allow humor to elicit laughter and add a touch of joy and liveliness...

Sample *khutba* and sermon

Examination of conscience (Self-criticism)

<i>Khutba</i>	Sermon
- <i>Sunan al-Salihine wa Sunan al-'Abidine</i> , by Abu al-Walid al-Baji	1. Identify the status that self-criticism and examination of the conscience holds in religion
- <i>Mukhtassar Minhaj al-Qassidine</i> , By Ibn Qudama al-Maqdissi	2. Draw attention to failings made in self-criticism
- <i>Ighathat al-Lahtan</i> , by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya	3. Become familiar with some self-questioning methods

2- References texts

From the Quran:

[O you who have believed, fear Allah. And let every soul look to what it has put forth for tomorrow - and fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do.] (*Al-Hashr*: 18).

[By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it; And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right;- Truly he succeeds that purifies it. And he fails that corrupts it!] (*Ash-Shams*: 7-10).

[And know that Allah Knoweth what is in your hearts, and take heed of Him.] (*Al-Baqara*: 235).

From the Sunnah:

Al-Tirmidi reports on the authority of Cheddad Ibn Aws, may Allah be pleased with him, who quoted the Prophet (PBUH) saying: "A wise person is one who keeps a watch over his bodily desires and passions, and checks himself from that which is harmful and strives for that which will benefit him after death; and a foolish person is one who enslaves himself to his cravings and desires and expects from Allah the fulfillment of his futile desires." This hadith is said to be hassan. He said: "It means that one must first judge oneself in this world before being judged on the Day of Reckoning."

Quotes of the Companions and their disciples:

It is reported that 'Omar Ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, said: *"Take stock of yourselves before you are brought to account; weigh yourselves before you are weighed, for that will make the reckoning easier for you tomorrow, if you take stock of yourselves today and prepare yourselves for the ultimate presentation on the Day when you will be brought to Judgment, and not a secret of yours will be withheld."* (Al-Tirmidi).

Al Hassan al-Basri reported that the Companions of the Messenger (PBUH) said: *"He who would be happy to know what Allah has in store for him, let him look at what he has that is for Allah,"* and added: *"By God, that is true. Ponder what Allah has imposed on you, if you have fulfilled your obligations, then you shall have your reward from Allah, otherwise, refrain and be warned!"*

Opening

Praise be to God the Almighty, the Omnipotent whose greatness, beauty, and perfection cannot be defined, who created Man from clay, breathed into him of His spirit, ordained the angels to prostrate themselves before him, made him free and accountable and appointed him as His successor on earth; harnessed everything in the universe to serve him so he can assume the weighty responsibilities incumbent upon him, and endure the heavy trials associated with the greatest of all missions, that neither the heavens nor the earth or the mountains managed to carry.

He who knows Allah would understand his own truth and the purpose of his existence, and respect the rights His Creator has over him. He joins the righteous and the just who deserve happiness in this world and in the hereafter. But he who turns away from Allah misses the purpose of his existence in this world. He will reap nothing but unhappiness, live in affliction and disappointment and shall have none to blame but himself.

Peace and prayers be upon the Prophet, the most elevated among all the progeny of Adam, noblest of all creatures. We testify that he has fulfilled the *Amana* and conveyed the message, that he has brought counsel to the Ummah and guided it onto the path of righteousness, eternally unchanged, the path from which all those who stray are lost.

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate, and praise be to Allah, whom we thank, to whom we turn for sustenance, from whom we ask forgiveness and whom we implore, and in whom we take refuge against ourselves and our ill deeds. He whom Allah guides cannot be led astray, and he who goes astray can have no guide. I testify that there is no god besides Allah and that He has no partner, and I testify that Mohammed is His Messenger, and prayers and peace be upon him as well as upon his family, his companions and those who followed him.

Introduction

Dear beloved!

Which one of us did not at some point engage in accounting with dirhams or dinars? Even the little child, who receives a few coins from his father to buy sweets or toys, knows how much he has spent and how much is left with him.

But who among us exercises another form of accounting, one where he counts his good and bad deeds and takes stock of his charitable acts and his malicious ones?

How many of us were too busy counting our wealth, possessions and businesses to take stock of our acts of obedience to Allah, our sins and our failings? Today's *khutba* is about self-questioning or *muhasaba*.

Fellow Muslims,

In day-to-day business, we engage in a stringent, exhaustive and continuous count of our transactions to find out what we have gained or lost, the volume of our losses, if any, and the causes that underlie these losses, resolutely determined to prevent them from further increases that would signal the end of our trade.

I would like to ask you one question: Do we question ourselves about our trade for the hereafter, the one the Lord warns us in His Holy Book not to dilapidate [***O ye who believe! shall I lead you to a bargain that will save you from a grievous Penalty? That ye believe in Allah and His Apostle and that ye strive (your utmost) in the Cause of Allah with your property and your persons: that will be best for you if ye but knew! He will forgive you your sins and admit you to Gardens beneath which rivers flow and to beautiful mansions in Gardens of Eternity: that is indeed the supreme Achievement. And another (favor will He bestow) which ye do love help from Allah and a speedy victory: so give the Glad Tidings to the Believers.***] (Al-Saff: 13-10).

If the profits we make in worldly commerce are limited and ephemeral, what advantages and benefits Allah promises us in our trade for the afterlife according to these verses? Allah (SWT) promises us two gains, one is salvation from the flames of hell, and the second one is a life of eternity in the gardens of Eden. How prodigious and incomparable are these profits! By Allah, it is an immeasurable benefit! So why are so many people oblivious to what awaits them? Should we not learn how to hold ourselves accountable before the Day of Judgment? The day when neither the dirham nor the dinar will be of any succor as will our good deeds! This is the theme of our *khutba* today.

How self-criticism is seen in religion

Fellow believers, before going into further detail, let us start by looking at the status of self-criticism in religion and decide whether this is an unavoidable obligation imposed by religion or an optional action that people are free to engage in or refrain from. To this question we will answer as follows:

First, Allah, in His wisdom, created the human being and assigned to him a heavy responsibility and an equally important entrustment (*amana*), namely, reforming oneself and purifying one's mind as per God's commandments, and rejecting everything He has forbidden through the revelations to His messengers, peace be upon them. In this regard, Allah says: [***By the Soul and the proportion and order Given to it. And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right; Truly he succeeds that purifies it. And he fails that corrupts it!***] The soul can only be purified through continuous self-questioning and criticism at every moment and every step.

Second, the Lord tells us: [***O ye who believe! Fear Allah and let every soul look to what (provision) he has sent forth for the morrow. Yea fear Allah: for Allah is well-acquainted with (all) that ye do.***]

Here Allah draws a comparison between two aspects because of their close correlation, namely, fear of Allah and the person's consideration of what he has put aside in preparation for the Day of Judgment. This consideration means self-questioning and accountability and it is obligatory, validated by its close association with piety which is one of the cardinal duties Allah imposed on the human being. The *fiqh* rule says "what is indispensable to the accomplishment of a duty is a duty in itself."

Let us take account of ourselves before we are brought to account on the Day of Reckoning!

Third, al-Tirmidi reports on the authority of Cheddar Ibn Aws, may God be pleased with him, who quoted the Prophet (PBUH), saying: "A wise person is one who keeps watch over his bodily desires and passions, checks himself from that which is harmful and strives for that which will benefit him after death; and a foolish person is one who submits to his cravings and desires and expects from Allah the fulfillment of his futile desires." The *hadith* is said to be *hassan* and means that "one must first judge oneself in this world before being judged on the Day of Judgment."

In the **Sahih** of Muslim, part of the *hadith* quoted by Abu Darr al-Ghifari, may Allah be pleased with him, quoting the Prophet (PBUH) who reports the following divine word: “O My servants, it is but your deeds that I reckon up for you and then recompense you for, so let him who finds good praise Allah, and let him who finds other than that, blame no one but himself.” So if you are going to regret your sins and rebuke yourself when your actions are reviewed on the Day of Judgment before the Almighty, when you are unable to correct or add to them, would it not be preferable that you review your actions today while you are still in this world and have the opportunity to make up for lost time, correct shortcomings and repent for the sins committed in violation of Allah’s injunctions? ‘Omar Ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “Demand accounts of yourselves before you are brought to account; weigh yourselves before you are weighed, for that will make the reckoning much easier for you tomorrow.”

Let us take account of ourselves before we are brought to account on the Day of Reckoning!

Spiritual accounting is therefore at the fundament of perfecting actions and purging the impurities that corrupt them.

Fourth: Allah says: **[And know that Allah knoweth what is in your hearts and take heed of Him; and know that Allah is Oft Forgiving Most Forbearing.]**

Commenting on this verse, Hujjat al-Islam Abu Hamed al-Ghazali explains: “The insightful among Allah’s worshipers have understood that Allah watches over them, and that they shall be accountable on the Day of Judgment and will have to justify even the smallest of their actions. They realized that in genuine self-questioning and criticism at every move and every breath lies their salvation. He who judges himself before we are brought to account on the Day of Reckoning will see his Hisab (account) lightened, find answers to the questions he will be asked and reach the safe shore of a happy end. But he who does not judge himself, his remorse will be long, his walk of shame on the Day of Judgment will be endless and his sins will doom him to humiliation and perdition.”⁽²⁵⁾

(25) *Ihya' 'Ulum ad-Din*, Vol. 3, p. 84.

Let us take account of ourselves before we are brought to account on the Day of Reckoning!

Surely, we have now understood that one of the first and foremost obligations of believers is to judge themselves. Through this self-criticism, they will heed what Allah has prescribed and even go beyond the call of duty through the voluntary actions they will accomplish without seeking any retribution. Without self-criticism, neither faith nor action will be complete.

O servants of Allah! What must we deduce from all of this? That to engage in self-monitoring and criticism is a duty and an obligation! Let us judge ourselves then before we are brought to account on the Day of Reckoning! And may Allah help us in this endeavor.

Beloved! One of the gravest mistakes people commit when it comes to self-criticism is to consider themselves as pure:

1. Considering oneself as pure and above reproach

When the individual is pleased with himself and complacent, he sees no reason for engaging in self-judgment, or an inclination to blame himself. The very notion of undertaking this self-criticism will go against the conviction of innocence he has been nurturing for a longtime. He will see in the hunt of his possible flaws and failings a waste of time and a pursuit of illusions. Therefore, he who seeks to judge himself must first start by accusing it mercilessly, for only through this spiritual accounting can the individual guarantee the cleansing of his actions from their impurities and failings. In this lies the true essence of mercy and compassion for one's soul!

Abu al-'Atahya described how he perceived himself when he put his soul on the bench of the accused and composed these verses:

*The content eye is blind to all failings
But the critical eye leaves no flaw concealed*

Let us take account of ourselves before we are brought to account on the Day of Reckoning!

O people of Allah and His obedient servants, our need to consider ourselves under a suspicious and probing eye exists because to think well of oneself

impairs one's objectivity in self-examination and leads one to see virtue in vice and perfection in flaws. The true loving person sees also the flaws and failings of his beloved one.

He who has a stern opinion of himself is one who knows himself best, unlike the one who maintains a high opinion of himself, because in truth he knows nothing of himself.

*I was plagued with a soul none worse have I seen
Contentious and querulous when I chastise it
Many are the reprehensible things I have come to accept
And great are the sins I have come to commit
Many a sympathizer proffered his advice
But of this advice I made light and resented
This nether world with its many temptations lured me
And I forfeited my religion and embraced this world
With guile I pursued this world
Sweetly I solicited it and indeed soared in it
In the pursuit of virtue I had many an obstacle
Hindering my steps as I virtue seek
Were I one to hold myself accountable
I would rise against my whims and rebel against this soul of mine*

The critical person is one who has come to truly know himself, and the one who thinks well of himself is indeed the most ignorant of all.

Most people are unfortunately too indulgent towards themselves and take pleasure in patting themselves on the shoulder and defending their failings by labeling themselves as righteous and virtuous.

Why would they then think of questioning themselves when they have struck an alliance with it for as long as they shall exist?

2. Preoccupation with judging others as opposed to judging oneself

Dear faithful! Many people show lenience when they judge their own excesses, inadequacies or shortfalls, or even refrain entirely from engaging in any examination of their conscience, never admonishing themselves for their errors and injustices, even in what they are clearly responsible and

accountable for. Such people, and we are among them, only engage in criticism when it comes to the other, especially when this other failed us, caused us some prejudice, or may do so in the future, be it in the long-term. It is amazing how we scrutinize the faults of others and magnify them even when they are insignificant, mercilessly criticizing them with not a shred of tolerance, unaccepting of apologies, even profuse ones. Yet, when it comes to himself, the individual perceives his vices and aberrations as small errors of no consequence and finds excuses for them with many a pretext.

As-Sarri said: *“He who obeys Allah has fathomed the secret of life, but he who is swayed by material pursuits has gone astray. The foolish comes and goes in futile pursuits and the wise is constantly chasing after his faults.”*⁽²⁶⁾

Are we then resolved to hound our faults and invite others to do so? Have we not assimilated what Allah has decreed in the divine book: *“Every soul draws the meed of its acts on none but itself: no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another. Your goal in the end is towards Allah. He will tell you the truth of the things wherein ye disputed.”* (Al-An'am: 164).

Let us ponder the verses of this poet:

*Be patient with this world and let every lost soul
Tumble into the abyss as it pursues its whims
Let men and the material world be, some tackling it
With sharpened claws, others with words
He who does not question his actions
Shall fall in great disrepute and quandary*

According to Ibn al-Qayyim, *“Self-criticism is the stage at which the individual must distinguish between his rights and his obligations, to claim what is his and pay what he owes. Spiritual accounting precedes in its importance repentance. Once the individual recognizes what is his and what he owes, he would apply himself to paying what he owes and then proceed from there to repentance.”*⁽²⁷⁾

(26) *Eeqadh a-Himam fi Sharh Matn al-Hikam*, Vol 1, page 15.

(27) *Madarij as-Salikine*, Vol. 1/133.

Let us take account of ourselves before we are brought to account on the Day of Reckoning!

In his book *Qut al-Qulub*, Abu Taleb al-Makki says: "According to some ancestors, an individual was more rigorous in the examination of his conscience than if he were demanding accounts from an associate. Some scholars believe that one sign of detestableness is when people are quick to cite the faults of others and forget theirs, loathing people based on suspicions yet convinced of their own perfection. They would forego all sense of accountability as a result of their long standing disregard of Allah (SWT). The carefree in the nether world are the ultimate losers in the Hereafter."

• Preoccupation with acts of obedience and seeking closeness to Allah without engaging in self-examination

Dear beloved! What happens when we immerse ourselves wholeheartedly in worship and renounce self-judgment? The answer is that our good intentions and conduct may be subverted by many aberrations. They become feeble, corrupt and oblivious from many angles, to such extent that they almost cease to exist or morph into routines and purely material pursuits.

Al-Hassan al-Basri said: "The Companions of the Messenger (PBUH) said: 'He who would be happy to learn what Allah has in store for him, let him look at what he does for Allah'." The he said: "By Allah, yes, their words are true. Ponder what Allah has imposed on you. If you have fulfilled your obligations, then reward will be yours from Allah. Otherwise, be warned!"

One of the Prophet's followers said: "O son of Adam, evoke your God day and night. Decide what torture you are praying to be saved from, what Paradise you would like to enter and what blessing you are thankful for. If you do so, you will find in yourself a repugnance to sins and your actions will be made much easier."

Let us take account of ourselves before we are brought to account on the Day of Reckoning!

Additional content on self-criticism

Dear believers! The individual who spends his time judging others, scrutinizing their defects, exposing their faults, blaming them excessively and holding

them accountable, is in fact meddling with what is of no concern to him and of no benefit whatsoever. On the contrary, he is committing weighty sins and inviting iniquity, as the Prophet (PBUH) said in his hadith: *“Nothing is worse than a man scorning his Muslim brother. The blood, wealth and honor of the Muslim are sacred to all Muslims”*. (Muslim)

Let us take account of ourselves before we are brought to account on the Day of Reckoning!

You have no power to change the morals or habits of Men, no matter how debauched they are or fraught with weaknesses and failings. Man will remain as he is and you will remain as you are, running after the impossible, which is for him to change just because you exposed his defects and doggedly divulged what you believe to be a wrong and a deficiency. Alas! Would it not have been more constructive if you had directed this effort at yourself and engaged in your own comprehensive, candid and sincere self-criticism, without lying to yourself and deceiving it? If you were indeed able to judge yourself and turn the spotlight on your own failings and flaws, you would have discovered things that would take a lifetime to correct and then refrained from following the same path in the future. Even worse, you may come to the end of your life without managing to accomplish all your duties, give up everything prohibited and purify the soul from all its ills. Why then waste time on the responsibilities of others, their failings and their inadequacies while we forget ourselves.

Let us take account of ourselves before we are brought to account on the Day of Reckoning!

A poet once said:

*If out of harm's way you wish to live
With religion safeguarded and honor protected
Hold your tongue lest it whispers someone's flaws
For you are full of flaws and people have tongues
If your eye catches some flaw
Let it be and tell it: O eye, people also have eyes
Live in peace and forgive he who transgresses
And part with people but do it in the best manner*

Dear Muslim brothers, do you not see that if anyone is more deserving and in need of this self-criticism, it is you and your conscience. If the conscience is sincere and your quest for goodness is genuine, you will be successful as the divine words predict: "Truly he succeeds that purifies it. And he fails that corrupts it!"

Most people are at peace with themselves, feeling self-righteous and staunchly defending their aberrations, seeing them as virtues instead and making light of their gravity. Why then would they bother to judge themselves when they have chosen complacency and their own side for as long as they shall live?

Let us take account of ourselves before we are brought to account on the Day of Reckoning!

Human examples

Dearly beloved! If we wish to make headway in our own self-criticism, and I am confident we all do, let us draw inspiration from the shining models that abound in our Islamic history, many of them famous for their attachment to self-criticism:

- Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "*One day I followed 'Omar Ibn al-Khattab, may God be pleased with him, until he came to a walled-in garden. I heard him from behind the wall saying: "By God, either fear God, O Ibn al-Khattab, or He will chastise you".*
- Fudhayl Ibn Zayd al-Ruqashi, may Allah be pleased with him, gave this piece of advice one day: "*Let no one distract you from your own self, for ultimately you are accountable for it and no one else, and do not waste your day with stories and hearsay, or 'maybe I will do this or I will do that.' You are accountable for everything you say.*"
- One of the followers, Al-Ahnaf Ibn Kays, may Allah have mercy on him, used to put his finger in front of the lamp when dawn approaches and say: "*By God, O Hunayf, what made you do this on that day?*"
- Ibrahim al-Taymi, may Allah have mercy on him, said: "*I envisioned myself in paradise, eating its fruits, drinking from its rivers and embracing its maidens. Then I imagined myself in hell, eating its bitter fruits, drinking its molten lava and entangled in my chains. When I recollected myself, I asked: 'O my soul, which of these would you prefer?' And the reply was: 'To go back to life and do well.' I said, 'you are now in this life, now is the time.'*"

- And here is Al-Hassan al-Basri, May Allah have mercy on him, saying: “A person will be fine as long he is his own counselor and his self-examination is his own initiative”. Then he added: “The true believer has authority over himself and questions it for the sake of Allah. The judgment will be lighter for those who have been judging themselves in this world, and will be much more arduous for those who paid little attention to this.’

He also said: “When a believer is surprised by something he likes, he says ‘By God, I would love to have this and I need it but there is no way to it’. The true believers are held back by the Quran. The believer is like a prisoner in this world, endeavoring to save himself, knowing that he must account for everything he says, does, and thinks.”

Let us take account of ourselves before we are brought to account on the Day of Reckoning!

May Allah help us follow in the footsteps of these learned *imams* and emulate their actions.

Practical applications

Dearly beloved! Now that we are convinced of the imperative nature of this exercise and its utility, you are probably wondering how this spiritual accounting can be done.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya answers this question in his work *Madarij al-Salikine*. He says that self-criticism is the comparison between the blessings of Allah and one’s sins. In other words, to measure what God gives us and what we lay before Him. Only then can we realize the immense discrepancy and recognize that we can make the choice between His forgiveness and salvation from hell and damnation. Then the good deeds and the bad ones are weighed to know which of the two lean in favor of Man’s salvation. The second comparison is largely a comparison between your own actions.

I suggest, for my part, that the individual asks himself the following as he or she performs his religious duties:

What is the purpose behind my acts of worship? Am I performing them to please Allah, or do I have other designs? Have I performed them properly and fervently and felt the gratification of showing my veneration and obedience to

Allah, or am I still lethargic and reluctant to perform these acts of obedience, pursuing instead the delights of life with neither fear nor discernment? Am I really worthy of belonging to Islam? Have I satisfied all its conditions or am I still falling short of this honor? Do I love Allah and give precedence to this love over my love for myself, my property, my children and my spouse? And what is the proof of my love for Allah? These are all questions that must be part of the self-questioning and examination of one's consciousness.

Let us take account of ourselves before we are brought to account on the Day of Reckoning!

Servants of Allah! Al-Mawardi shows us in his book *Adab ad-Dunya wa ad-Dine* the way of engaging in self-criticism:

“ The individual must reflect at night on what he did during the day, for the night brings counsel and clears the mind. If the review is good, he should persevere or even aim for higher. If it is unsatisfactory, he must compensate as much as possible while avoiding future failings.

By engaging in this review, he will conclude that his actions fall into one of the following four categories: he has managed to fulfill the goal he set for himself, he has erred by placing it wrongfully, he has partially achieved his goal, or he has driven it so intensely that he exceeded the prescribed limits.”⁽²⁸⁾

Worthy listeners! In his book *Ighathat al-Lahfan*, Ibn al-Qayyim differentiates between two types of self-criticism, one that precedes the deed and another that comes after.

First type: The individual takes a moment to reflect before taking an action and only embarks on it after carefully weighing its advantages and disadvantages. The late al-Hassan, may Allah have mercy on him, says in this regard: *“God bless the Man who reflects on his problem. If he sees that it is for Allah he moves ahead, otherwise he holds back.”*

Second type: Judging oneself after the act. This exercise has three components:

- Judging oneself for failing to properly perform an act of obedience due to Allah;

(28) *Adab ad-Dunya wa ad-Din*, Vol. 1, p. 454.

- Self-criticism for an action of which the non-accomplishment would have been more beneficial than the accomplishment; and
- Judging oneself after performing a lawful and permissible action: Why was it performed? Was the aim behind it to please Allah and aspire to the reward of the afterlife, or was it done to achieve some material gain or pleasure on earth and thus forfeiting that reward?

Let us take account of ourselves before we are brought to account on the Day of Reckoning!

To conclude: the individual must start by bringing himself to account about the duties incumbent on him and compensate by correcting any errors. Where a violation is noted, he must repent, evoke Allah and ask for forgiveness through good expiating deeds.

He must reprimand himself for his negligence and seek pardon by evoking Allah. He must question his conscience and hold himself accountable for every word he says, every step he takes, every action his hands undertakes and every word he hears. What was their intention and in what way were they done? He must keep a record of his actions and words: a record for the intention behind them, and another one for the manner in which they were undertaken. The first record establishes the sincerity of intentions, and the second one records the action that follows the intention.

Let us take account of ourselves before we are brought to account on the Day of Reckoning!

Dearly beloved! What we must retain and dutifully apply from this topic is that our self-questioning must follow these steps:

1. Before undertaking any action, so that it is carried out in good faith and with the intention of pleasing Allah. Otherwise, it must be renounced;
2. To continue with our self-criticism as we proceed with our action, persevering if it is undertaken in good faith and making sure that its execution remains in line with divine laws and the teachings of the Prophet (PBUH);
3. After completing the action, we question ourselves whether it was done purely to please Allah and in line with divine laws. If so, we praise Allah

and continue with the same religious fervor. But where a flaw is noted in intention or some discordance with divine laws, we must hasten to repent and remain cautious not to commit this error again;

4. Start the self-questioning about obligations before sunan and recommended actions, and about avoiding prohibited deeds first, and then undesirable ones.

Let us take account of ourselves before we are brought to account on the Day of Reckoning!

Prayers to conclude the sermon

O Allah, nothing is light except what which you have made light. You lighten the sadness if You desire so. Lord, inspire us to judge ourselves in this world before we are brought to account on the Day of Reckoning. Oh Allah, let us judge ourselves rather than occupy ourselves with the faults and sins of others.

Lord, open our eyes to our faults and help us correct the failings and deficiencies of our faith and our duties, as well as our actions and dealings with others. Awaken us from our oblivion and negligence, and inspire us dedication and rectitude, in word and in action. May Allah enlighten us with His grace and shower us with His blessings.

How to evaluate the *khutba*/sermon?

The speaker evaluates the *khutba* in terms of formulation and delivery by monitoring the audiences' reactions, inviting some of them to share their impressions about him, directly or indirectly. The orator scrutinizes the faces of the listeners as he delivers his address to determine whether they find it appreciable or heavy, and endeavors to continuously perfect it.

The *khutba*/sermon must be explored and the factors of its success must be identified and further developed, just as the causes of failure must be isolated, corrected and avoided. This way, if the same topic is addressed in another *khutba*, it would be prepared and delivered with a higher level of mastery. This evaluation can also be used to improve future lectures and sermons.

Techniques of evaluating a *khutba*/sermon

- Conduct an audio recording of the *khutba*/sermon, sometimes even an audio-visual one. It is necessary in this instance to use high quality equipment and have knowledge of their use, particularly with photography;
- Appoint permanent observers for *khutba*/sermon evaluation. These observers must have a mandatory level of religious knowledge, artistic sense and impartiality in expressing their opinion. This way, their observations would be valuable and relevant to enhancing and elevating the discourse;
- Use a *khutba*/sermon evaluation grid as per the sample below, or similar;
- Reserve a grid for each lecture/sermon, to be completed by the speaker immediately after delivery as part of his self-assessment, or to be completed by others. The evaluation is to be analyzed without further delay in order to implement the outcome of the analysis.

***Khutba*/Sermon evaluation grid**

Objective 1	G	A	M	Objective 2	G	A	M	Remembering quotations and good grasp of subject	G	A	M
Cause: Corrective action:			Cause: Corrective action:			Cause: Corrective action:					
Objective 3	G	A	M	Objective 4	G	A	M	Linkages to reality	G	A	M
Cause: Corrective action:			Cause: Corrective action:			Cause: Corrective action:					
Opening words	G	A	M	Importance of topic in religion	G	A	M	Use of voice/tone	G	A	M
Cause: Corrective action:			Cause: Corrective action:			Cause: Corrective action:					
Underlining deviations	G	A	M	Other content related to topic	G	A	M	Usage of signs	G	A	M
Cause: Corrective action:			Cause: Corrective action:			Cause: Corrective action:					
Human models	G	A	M	Practical applications	G	A	M	Repetition of key sentences	G	A	M
Cause: Corrective action:			Cause: Corrective action:			Cause: Corrective action:					
Attention to topic's particularity	G	A	M	Using poetry, stories and maxims	G	A	M	Using the interrogative form	G	A	M
Cause: Corrective action:			Cause: Corrective action:			Cause: Corrective action:					

CHAPTER FOUR

DAA'WA, DIALOGUE AND COMMUNICATION MISSIONS

Culture of dialogue and communication

▪ How important is dialogue in *daa'wa* and religious sensitization

1. What is meant by dialogue?

Dialogue is an exchange of ideas or opinions on a particular issue, especially a political or religious one, with a view to reaching an amicable agreement or settlement.

In *al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Quran*, al-Raghib explains that conversation and dialogue is the exchange of words.

Generally speaking, dialogue uses the channel of language, but it can also take the form of writings or signs. It can be engaged in with others (dialogue) as well as with oneself.

2. What is the position of dialogue in the Quran?

The Quran uses the concept of dialogue extensively. Words carrying the meaning of dialogue appear in three different contexts:

Verse 1	<i>[He said to his companion, in the course of a mutual argument: "More wealth have I than you, and more honor and power in (my following of) men."]</i> (<i>al-Kahf</i> : 34)
Verse 2	<i>[His companion said to him, in the course of the argument with him: "Dost thou deny Him Who created thee out of dust, then out of a sperm-drop, then fashioned thee into a man?"]</i> (<i>Al-Kahf</i> : 37)
Verse 3	<i>[Allah has indeed heard (and accepted) the statement of the woman who pleads with thee concerning her husband and carries her complaint (in prayer) to Allah. And Allah (always) hears the arguments between both sides among you: for Allah hears and sees (all things).]</i> (<i>Al-Mujadilah</i> : 1).

Debate/contend appears in the Quran repeatedly, mainly as an exchange between believers in the true religion and their detractors.

Verse 1	<i>[When (Jesus) the son of Mary is held up as an example, behold, thy people raise a clamor thereat (in ridicule)! And they say, "Are our gods best, or he?" This they set forth to thee, only by way of disputation: yea, they are a contentious people.] (Al-Zukhruf: 58-57)</i>
Verse 2	<i>[Contend not on behalf of such as betray their own souls; for Allah loveth not one given to perfidy and crime.] (An-Nissaa: 107)</i>
Verse 3	<i>[One Day every soul will come up struggling for itself, and every soul will be recompensed (fully) for all its actions, and none will be unjustly dealt with.] (An-Nahl: 111).</i>
Verse 4	<i>[We have explained in detail in this Quran, for the benefit of mankind, every kind of similitude: but man is, in most things, contentious.] (Al-Kahf: 54)</i>
Verse 5	<i>[And they say, "Are our gods best, or he?" This they set forth to thee, only by way of disputation: yea, they are a contentious people.] (Az-Zukhruf: 58)</i>

Pondering the verses on dialogue and argumentation, one can draw the following comparison between them:

Comparison	
Dialogue	Debate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Its purpose is understanding and persuasion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Its goal is to challenge and convince the opponent differently
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Both parties progress towards agreement and concurrence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The exchange escalates to a dispute
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Both parties seek to highlight what they have in common 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Each party strives to prove his/her superiority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Desired in respect of religious, social, educational, <i>daa'wa</i> and political matters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frowned upon in religion except if conducted in the best forms of argumentation

3. What are the foundations of the culture of dialogue in Islam?

The culture of dialogue in Islam is based on the principle of Man's vice regency on earth and the advantage human beings have over other creatures, including the *jinn*, having been blessed with freedom of choice and responsibility. The latter entails that Man must be addressed on the facts of existence and religious obligations in ways and methods that appeal to reason, proffer evidence and favor understanding. Dialogue features at the top of these methods, accompanied by the other person's right to express his opinion, ask for clarifications and make his personal position known.

It is in this context that dialogue was inscribed in the Quran and the Sunnah in a most sublime form, open to any objection and ready to assimilate the divergent opinion.

4. What is the best example of dialogue in the Quran?

The best Quranic example of dialogue took place between Allah and Satan (*Iblis*) and appears in many places of the Quran, especially verses 71-83 of *Sad*:

[Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I am about to create man from clay: "When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him." So the angels prostrated themselves, all of them together: Not so Iblis: he was haughty, and became one of those who reject Faith. ((Allah)) said: "O Iblis! What prevents thee from prostrating thyself to one whom I have created with my hands? Art thou haughty? Or art thou one of the high (and mighty) ones?" (Iblis) said: "I am better than he: thou createdst me from fire, and him thou createdst from clay." ((Allah)) said: "Then get thee out from here: for thou art rejected, accursed." And My curse shall be on thee till the Day of Judgment." (Iblis) said: "O my Lord! Give me then respite till the Day the (dead) are raised." ((Allah)) said: "Respite then is granted thee- "Till the Day of the Time Appointed." (Iblis) said: "Then, by Thy power, I will put them all in the wrong,-" Except Thy Servants amongst them, sincere and purified (by Thy Grace).]

5. What are the key lessons to be drawn from dialogue between Allah and Satan?

Lesson 1	The legitimacy of using dialogue in the event of a problem in the relationship between two parties
Lesson 2	The more complex the discord between two parties is, the more enriching and useful dialogue becomes in defining and distinguishing positions
Lesson 3	Dialogue is permissible between the party that is right and the wrong one, regardless of the gravity of his/her error, in order to refute his /her arguments.

6. What is the best example of dialogue in the Sunnah?

Abdullah Ibn 'Omar said: *"My father 'Omar Ibn al-Khattab said: While we were one day sitting with the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), there appeared before us a man dressed in extremely white clothes and with very black hair. No traces of journeying were visible on him, and none of us knew him. He sat down close by the Prophet (PBUH), rested his knee against his thighs, and said, "O Mohammed! Inform me about Islam." The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "Islam is that you should testify that there is no deity except Allah and that Mohammed is His Messenger, that you should perform prayers, pay the Zakat, fast during Ramadan, and perform Hajj to the House, if you are able to do so." The man said, "You have spoken truly." We were astonished at his questioning him (the Messenger) and telling him that he was right, but he went on to say, "Inform me about faith (Iman)." He (PBUH) answered, "It is that you believe in Allah and His angels and His Books and His Messengers and in the Last Day, and in fate (qadar), both in its good and in its evil aspects." He said, "You have spoken truly." Then he (the man) said, "Inform me about Ihsaan." He (the Messenger of Allah) answered, "It is that you should serve Allah as though you could see Him, for though you cannot see Him yet (know that) He sees you." He said, "Inform me about the Hour." He (the Messenger of Allah) said, "About that, the one questioned knows no more than the questioner." So he said, "Well, inform me about the signs thereof." He said, "They are that the slave-girl will give birth to her mistress, that you will see the barefooted, naked, destitute, the herdsmen of the sheep (competing with each other) in raising*

lofty buildings." Thereupon the man went off. I waited a while, and then he (the Messenger of Allah) said, "O Umar, do you know who that questioner was?" I replied, "Allah and His Messenger know better." He said, "That was Jibril (the Angel Gabriel). He came to teach you your religion."⁽²⁹⁾

What are the main lessons to be learned from Gabriel's dialogue with the Messenger (PBUH)?

- It is recommended to make use of a dialogue between two persons to teach a group of people, as in the example above;
- In dialogue, the discussion can be directed to attract the attention of the interlocutor on a subject, an idea or a question, knowing that the person asking knows in advance the correct answer. This method is common in the lessons that the Prophet (PBUH) gave his Companions, as in the following example where Mu'adh Ibn Jabal reported: "*The Prophet (PBUH) said, "O Mu'adh, do you know what is the right of Allah upon His servants?" I said, "Allah and His Messenger know best." The Prophet said, "To worship Him alone and to associate none in worship with Him. And do you know what is their right upon Him?" I said, "Allah and His Messenger know best." The Prophet said, "Not to punish them if they do so."⁽³⁰⁾*

7. What are the general objectives of dialogue in Islam?

1. To clarify the structure and actual content of the *khutba* to mold the listener's attitude on the basis of correct content, thus avoiding any confusion or ambiguity;
2. To allow the interlocutor to demand additional clarifications if he/she wishes to ascertain facts;
3. To respect the interlocutor's right to express his/her position, to object, to engage the responsibility of others and to demand additional evidence and information;
4. To strive to clarify the issue and identify points of concordance and disagreement in order to bring the interlocutors to agreement;

(29) Reported by the two sheikhs.

(30) Reported by the two sheikhs

5. To call to the way of Allah and reveal the truth to people, determine what prevents understanding of religion and commitment to its teachings and laws, and provide all necessary clarifications.

▪ Dialogue, dispute management and achieving human rapprochement

What are some of the rules of dialogue in Islam?

A calm dialogue often escalates into an argument where each party tries to have the upper hand. The discussion heats up, voices rise, arguments are rejected and the quest for and acquiescence to the truth give way to obstinacy. Conscious of this, the Quran recommends that Muslims, and especially *du'ats* (preachers), adhere to a number of rules to keep dialogue the tool for persuasion, understanding and refuting arguments it is intended to be.

These rules are summarized in the following:

▪ Adoption of the best argument as commanded by Allah in the Quran:

This method of dialogue is suitable and likely to produce the best results, as explained in the divine verse: [*Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance.*] (An-Nahl: 125).

Al-Aloussy wrote: "*His approach (PBUH) to daa'wa differed according to the level of his audience. Some are the knowledgeable elite whose exceptional minds are predisposed to grasp meanings and prone to the pursuit of the truth at its different layers. Those are preached to with gentle wisdom. Then there is the general public, irresolute, poorly prepared, clinging to their sensorial perceptions, strongly attached to customs and traditions, unable to grasp the evidence proposed, yet they are not obstinate and those must be called through gentle exhortation.*

Others are obstinate and argue using wrong evidence, too determined to remain faithful to their ancestors and with heretic beliefs deeply embedded in their hearts. With these, no amount of gentle exhortation or maxims are effective. They must be dealt with using heavy arguments, dispensed in good argumentation style, to break their attitude and banish their obstinacy. About them, the Prophet (PBUH) called for disputing in the most suitable manner." (Ruh al-Ma'aani).

- **Engaging in dialogue with another party whilst seeking mutual benefit:** This entails accepting the reasoning of the interlocutor and refraining from convincing him from the outset that he is wrong. He must be allowed to perceive the other party's willingness to recognize, in all impartiality and honesty, the truthfulness that exudes from the interlocutor's words. This approach encourages the emulation of the model embodied by the interlocutor and opening up to the acceptance of the truth.

The best example in this regard is drawn from the Quran which, while revealing the ultimate Truth to the Prophet (PBUH), placed him at the same level as his interlocutors among the People of the Book, reminding them of the need to separate the good grain from the chaff. Divergence between two parties implies that only one of them is correct, as stated in the Quran: [**Say: "Who gives you sustenance, from the heavens and the earth?" Say: "It is Allah. and certain it is that either we or ye are on right guidance or in manifest error!" Say: "Ye shall not be questioned as to our sins, nor shall we be questioned as to what ye do." Say: "Our Lord will gather us together and will in the end decide the matter between us (and you) in truth and justice: and He is the one to decide, the One Who knows all."**]

[**Say: "The Truth has arrived, and Falsehood neither creates anything new, nor restores anything." Say: "If I am astray, I only stray to the loss of my own soul: but if I receive guidance, it is because of the inspiration of my Lord to me: it is He Who hears all things, and is (ever) near."**]

Imam ach-Chafei used to say to his interlocutors: *"My words are right but could be wrong, and your words are wrong but could be right."* He also said: *"I have never conversed with anyone without praying that Allah would make the truth known through the mouth of my interlocutor."* What is clear here is the true believer's desire to know the truth from his interlocutor just as strongly as he wishes the other would see this truth as it takes shape through his own words. Thus, the two parties' quest for the truth would lead them both to it.

- **Mastering the subject of dialogue:** The ability to clarify what is said without ambiguity, hesitation or stumbling projects a favorable image of the speaker, contrary to one who lacks strong evidence or insight. The Quran criticized the People of the Book who argued with the Prophet (PBUH) not only about matters they were knowledgeable about, but also about what they knew little of. The Almighty says in this regard: *[Ah! ye are those who fell to disputing (even) in matters of which ye had some knowledge! but why dispute ye in matters of which ye have no knowledge? It is Allah Who knows and ye who know not! Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian but he was true in faith and bowed his will to Allah's (which is Islam) and he joined not gods with Allah.]* (Aal 'Imran: 66-67).

The Quran gives the People of the Book here the merit of their knowledge about the object of the dispute, but emphasizes the fact that they also ventured into what they were ignorant about. This is precisely what must be avoided in order for the dialogue to be fruitful and constructive.

- **Focusing on the points of convergence to initiate dialogue:** This will convey a sense of spiritual and intellectual symbiosis, as bringing opinions and positions closer together will be instrumental to moving the dialogue forward. The Quran says: *[And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): but say, "We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our Allah and your Allah is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam)."]* (Al-'Ankaboot: 46).

[Say: "O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah. that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah." If then they turn back, say ye: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's Will)."] (Aal 'Imran: 64).

A preacher said once to those who contested his approach: "Let us work together on what we have agreed on and forgive each other for our differences".

- **Advance irrefutable arguments to the intractable party:** It is desirable if these arguments are presented gently, with politeness and kindness, while cautioning against consequences, as in the following verses:

1- *[Hast thou not Turned thy vision to one who disputed with Abraham About his Lord, because Allah had granted him power? Abraham said: "My Lord is He Who Giveth life and death." He said: "I give life and death". Said Abraham: "But it is Allah that causeth the sun to rise from the east: Do thou then cause him to rise from the West." Thus was he confounded who (in arrogance) rejected faith. Nor doth Allah Give guidance to a people unjust.] (Al-Baqara: 258)*

2- *[Say: "See ye if the (Revelation) is (really) from Allah, and yet do ye reject it? Who is more astray than one who is in a schism far (from any purpose)?" Soon will We show them our Signs in the (furthest) regions (of the earth), and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth. Is it not enough that thy Lord doth witness all things? Ah indeed! Are they in doubt concerning the Meeting with their Lord? Ah indeed! It is He that doth encompass all things!]* (Ha-Mim, 52-54).

▪ **Communication technologies and their use by imams**

What is meant by communication?

It is the process of exchanging ideas, opinions and information among individuals.

This is the positive interaction that results from using communication senses in the transmission and reception of messages. It springs from a sincere desire to be in contact with the other and with his senses through mutual understanding, to discover the truth together or achieve a common goal.

Communication uses many channels, including behavior and actions such as greeting with a sign, a jovial face, a friendly demeanor or extending help and services to others.

Contact is the initiative of one party while communication occurs between two parties.

What are the objectives of communication in Islam?

Communication is a social necessity that responds to a variety of needs, including the fulfillment of the spiritual and socio-economic wellbeing of individuals. Add to this the importance that Islam confers on communication as an essential tool in conveying the message and sensitizing mankind to the weight of the duty of vice-regency entrusted to them and the obligation of worshiping Allah and adhering to the laws He decreed, reflected in thought, behavior and civilizational edification.

At the top of the communicative ladder in Islam is the communication that takes place between Allah and mankind through divine messages, from Adam's creation to when the revelation was sent to the seal of all prophets, Mohammed (PBUH). Allah says in this regard: [***Now have We caused the Word to reach them themselves, in order that they may receive admonition.***] (*Al-Qasas*: 51), and also: [***For We assuredly sent amongst every People an apostle, (with the Command), "Serve Allah, and eschew Evil": of the People were some whom Allah guided, and some on whom error became inevitably (established). So travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who denied (the Truth).***] (*An-Nahl*: 36). Behind communication in Islam is the desire to alert people that they are Allah's creatures, the Creator of all things and the manager of the Universe who created them free but responsible in this world, to choose one of the following:

- To know Allah through the attributes He chose to describe Himself with, to worship Him and obey Him, to be deserving of His munificence, to evolve on earth in line with His directives and be rewarded with eternal life in paradise;
- To abjure and disregard His truth, reject His laws and deserve the plights of this world and the torment of hell on the Day of Judgment.

Allah (SWT) said: *"I have divided prayer between Myself and My servant into two halves, and My servant shall have what he has asked for. When the servant says: All praise belongs to Allah the Rabb of all the Worlds. Allah (Mighty and Sublime is He) says: My servant has praised Me. And when he says: The Most Gracious the Most Merciful. Allah (Mighty and Sublime is He) says: My servant has extolled Me. And when he says: Master of the Day of Judgment. Allah says: My servant has glorified Me [and on one occasion He said: My servant has submitted to My power.] And when he says: You alone do we worship and from You alone do we seek help. He says: This is between Me and My servant, and My servant shall have what he has asked for. And when he says: Guide us to the Straight Path, the Path of those whom you have favoured, not of those upon whom is your anger, nor of those who are astray. He says: This is for My servant, and My servant shall have what he has asked for."* (Muslim).

In their approach to the divine message subject of communication with Allah (SWT), people are split into those who accept and respond and those who resist and reject: ***[For those who respond to their Lord are (all) good things. But those who respond not to Him even if they had all that is in the heavens and on earth and as much more (in vain) would they offer it for ransom. For them will the reckoning be terrible: their abode will be Hell what a bed of misery!]*** (Ar-Ra'd: 18).

It is surprising that the disbelievers in Allah and those who associate other deities with Him neglected communication with Him when He is the All-hearing and the fulfiller of prayers, to communicate with idols made out of stone or wood, who hear and answer naught.

[Praise be to Allah Who created (out of nothing) the heavens and the earth Who made the angels messengers with wings two or three or four (Pairs): He adds to Creation as He pleases: for Allah has power over all things. What Allah out of His Mercy doth bestow on mankind there is none can withhold: what He doth withhold there is none can grant apart from Him: and He is the Exalted in Power Full of Wisdom.] (Fater: 13-14).

Part of the communication between Allah and mankind is the latter's interaction with the messengers who, despite being fellow human beings, are the carriers of a divine message, explain its contents in words and deeds, engage fellow men in debates and co-exist with them. Communication at this level is physical and spiritual, contrary to communication with Allah which is primarily spiritual. It is through communication with the Messengers that mankind communicate with Allah: [***O ye who believe! give your response to Allah and His apostle when He calleth you to that which will give you life; and know that Allah cometh in between a man and his heart and that it is He to whom Ye shall (all) be gathered.***] (*Al-Anfal*: 24).

Thus, Allah equated the obedience of the messenger with obedience of Him and the love of the prophet with loving Him and seeking closeness to Him: [***He who obeys the Apostle obeys Allah: but if any turn away We have not sent thee to watch over their (evil deeds).***] (*An-Nissaa*: 80).

The Quran defined the limits of communication between messengers and their peoples, a most noble form of communication, to the transmission and explanation of Allah's message in all its dimensions and to defining the responsibilities, conditions and results of its implementation: [***We send the apostles only to give good news and to warn: so those who believe and mend (their lives),- upon them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. But those who reject our signs,- them shall punishment touch, for that they ceased not from transgressing.***] (*Al-An'am*: 48-49).

After the death of the Messenger (PBUH), communication continued through scholars who inherited this legacy and communicate with the Ummah to teach them about their religion and guide them towards the proper application of divine laws in their everyday life: [***Many of them dost thou see racing each other in sin and rancor and their eating of things forbidden. Evil indeed are the things that they do. Why do not the Rabbis and the doctors of laws forbid them from their (habit of) uttering sinful words and eating things forbidden? Evil indeed are their works.***] (*Al-Maida*: 62-63).

Communication between believers is based on the principle of "enjoining what is right and forbidding what is evil", which principle justifies the special position bestowed on the Ummah of Mohammed (PBUH) compared to all

nations that preceded it, as says this divine verse: [***The believers men and women are protectors one of another: they enjoin what is just and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers practice regular charity and obey Allah and His apostle. On them will Allah pour His mercy: for Allah is Exalted in power Wise.***] (*Al-Tawba*: 71).

When this relationship moves away from the public dimension into the private circle to become a parental relationship, a conjugal relationship, a family alliance, a neighborly or educational relationship, etc. communication remains invariably focused on the preservation of the religious message and reinforcing its application.

Communication between believers and other peoples revolves around transmitting the divine message to those who had no access to it, sensitizing them to its truth if they are open to this and treating them charitably. The Almighty says in this regard: [***Ye are the best of peoples evolved for mankind enjoining what is right forbidding what is wrong and believing in Allah. If only the People of the Book had faith it were best for them; among them are some who have faith but most of them are perverted transgressors.***] (*Aal 'Imran*: 110).

Moreover, acquaintance between Muslims and other peoples inevitably leads the latter to gain knowledge of the guidance and morals of virtue and piety that Muslims have: [***O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).***] (*Al-Hujurat*:13).

What are the forms of communication?

Communication takes the following forms:

- **Verbal language**
- **Artistic creation**
- **Body language**

What role does verbal language play in communication?

Verbal language is the first means of communication between people. Through this channel, comprehension, teaching, learning, assimilation, understanding and agreement take place, whether face-to-face, through the telephone, the internet or the fax, or through writing and reading. The latter dramatically expand the communication scope as they bow to no limitations in time and space. Today, when we read the writings of our ancestors, we communicate with thousands of scholars and reformers who lived in the past. We understand their knowledge and draw benefit from their intellectual production in all fields of knowledge, ultimately coming to love and appreciate them and to espouse their opinions and positions.

Language-based communication tools include public addresses, preaching, conferences, prose and poetry, newspaper articles, and lessons. Dialogue is the best way to achieve communication between speakers and listeners.

How can artistic creation be transformed into a communication means?

Thanks to its various manifestations, artistic creation represents another form of communication between creative people and all those who appreciate and grasp the aesthetic dimension of their works. Modern technology has made it possible to spread artistic creation on a large scale through sound and image, thus facilitating communication between people all over the world.

The orator or preacher who combines in his speech the soundness of content with the beauty of structure leaves a greater impact on people. He is able to embellish his address with an artistic twist that could be more eloquent than content itself.

What is meant by body language?

Body language refers to facial expressions such as the smile, friendly looks and demeanor, but also the clothes, body movements, the use of hands and head signs and even the entire body. This mode of communication is evoked in the Quran in many places, including the verse that says: [***Those who believe say “Why is not a Surah sent down (for us)?” But when a Surah of basic or categorical meaning is revealed and fighting is mentioned***

therein thou wilt see those in whose hearts is a disease looking at thee with a look of one in swoon at the approach of death: but more fitting for them.] (Mohammed: 20).

The hypocrites who look at the Messenger (PBUH) with eyes resembling those of people swooning at the approach of death, showed their reluctance to join *jihad* and to accept its decree, as the verse says: [**(Charity is) for those in need, who, in Allah's cause are restricted (from travel), and cannot move about in the land, seeking (For trade or work): the ignorant man thinks, because of their modesty, that they are free from want. Thou shalt know them by their (Unfailing) mark: They beg not importunately from all the sundry.**] (*Al-Baqara*: 273). Though financially poor, these people reveal by the looks on their faces and the state of their dress that they are morally rich.

Jaber says: "When the Prophet (PBUH) preached and mentioned the Day of Judgment, his anger became intense, his voice rose and his eyes became red, as if he was giving a warning of the enemy's arrival and saying: "The enemy has made a morning attack on you, and in the evening too." (**Sahih Muslim**)

What is the relationship between dialogue and communication?

Dialogue is expressed through the processes of speaking and listening. Each person has his or her own way of facilitating dialogue in order to achieve the expected result.

First: The gift of eloquence and fluency

What bases must be adopted to achieve persuasion in dialogue?

To be convincing in dialogue, the following conditions must be respected:

- **Remain courteous and pleasant throughout the dialogue,**
- **Speak politely,**
- **Avoid trivialities,**
- **Remain objective,**

- Address the listener without making him the subject of conversation,
- Avoid generalizations,
- Avoid interpreting the interlocutor's words negatively and jumping to assumptions,
- Distinguish between key issues and secondary ones.

1. To what extent do good words contribute to the success of communication?

Part of conducting a dialogue in gentle and kindly words is to explain content with easily understandable words and with neither affectation nor mannerism. Commenting the *hadith* that says “*the radical shall perish*,”⁽³¹⁾ an-Nawawi says: “*Fanatic zealots who exceed boundaries in words and deeds and bigots*,”⁽³²⁾ advocating instead softness and leniency in language [***But speak to him mildly; perchance he may take warning or fear ((Allah)).***] (*Ta-Ha*: 44)

It is also about using a beautiful, easy, clear and moving style. Ibn ‘Omar reports that two men came from the Mashreq and spoke. The Prophet (PBUH) was astonished and said “*Some forms of eloquence are akin to magic.*”⁽³³⁾

A man came to seek the intervention of ‘Omar Ibn Abdulaziz on a matter that was difficult to resolve. He spoke briefly to ‘Omar using graceful and delicate words, so much so that ‘Omar exclaimed “*This is lawful magic!*”. Zayd Ibn Iyas said to al-Chaabi: “*You wrecker of errands!*” meaning that he captivated people by his sweet talk to the point of making them forget their business.”⁽³⁴⁾

2. How to uphold good manners in dialogue?

In a *khutba*, good manners are reflected in the rejection of anything carrying a negative connotation: [***Say to My servants that they should (only) say those things that are best: for Satan doth sow dissensions among them:***

(31) Muslim.

(32) *Sharh Muslim* 269 by an-Nawawi.

(33) Al-Bukhari.

(34) *Sharh Ibn Battal*.

For Satan is to man an avowed enemy.] (*Al-Israa*: 53), [*Whenever ye speak, speak justly.*] (*Al-An'am*: 152), and [*Speak fair to the people*] (*Al-Baqara*: 83).

3. What is vain talk and how to avoid it?

Superfluous words have no reason to be in a dialogue. All that one needs to do is refraining from using them as they hardly enrich the discussion. The Almighty says: [*those*] **who avoid vain talk**] (*Al-Muminun*: 3). Al-Hassan al-Basri, may Allah have mercy on him, says: "*Blessed be he who wins when he speaks and is safe when he holds his tongue.*"⁽³⁵⁾

By avoiding superfluous and vain talk, the interlocutor preserves the worthiness of the dialogue and saves his time and that of others.

4. How to observe objectivity in dialogue?

This entails the adoption of a methodical approach supported by accurate evidence. It also means accepting the opinion of the other, if convincing, recognizing the victory of the opponent when his logic cannot be denied by a reasonable person, and adopting sound logic as a frame of reference.

5. How to address the listener rather than make him a subject of the dialogue?

This requires a total absence of prejudice and value judgments, and avoiding peremptory opinions as such actions could antagonize, annoy, and probably even hurt the interlocutor in his dignity. They may possibly provoke a negative or even violent reaction that may put an end to the dialogue.

The following example illustrates this situation. A man says to his interlocutor: "You are new to this field and lack maturity. You must first acquire some knowledge then come hold this dialogue" instead of gently telling him "You surely know that as human beings we make mistakes and must keep learning and aiming for maturity if we want to fulfill our ambitions and reach our goals."

(35) Ahmed Ibn Hanbal. *Az-Zuhd*.

6. How to avoid generalizations and mention specific situations in the dialogue?

We are often confronted to people who speak harshly because they tend to generalize or make arbitrary statements regarding others ... they express themselves through generalities which leave no room for exceptions.

When referring to opponents, the Holy Quran does not deal in generalities and describes them instead in specific terms, without exaggeration but also without omitting their qualities when mentioning their failings: ***[If only the People of the Book had faith, it were best for them: among them are some who have faith, but most of them are perverted transgressors.]*** (Aal 'Imran: 110).

[Among the People of the Book are some who, if entrusted with a hoard of gold, will (readily) pay it back; others, who, if entrusted with a single silver coin, will not repay it unless thou constantly stoodest demanding, because, they say, "there is no call on us (to keep faith) with these ignorant (Pagans)." but they tell a lie against Allah, and (well) they know it] (Aal 'Imran: 75).

What it meant by taking the interlocutor's words under their worst light?

One should avoid making gratuitous deductions by hastily interpreting the interlocutor's words before clearly and correctly understanding them. Such an approach can be misinterpreted and upset the interlocutor. This may not only disturb him psychologically but could also put an end to the discussion.

During a discussion, one of the interlocutors says to the other: "I am so busy I have no time to write to my relatives and friends or even call them!" And the other responds: "This shows that you are not organized and have little respect for other people's feelings."

One should not either appear as condescendingly dispensing counsel and advice when the dialogue is among peers, as if forcing the interlocutor to accept what is said as the indisputable truth. This provocative style is likely to jeopardize communication and tends sometimes to disservice the ideas proposed by relegating them to a secondary position.

Why is it important to distinguish between essential matters and secondary ones before and during the dialogue?

Two elements are key to boosting dialogue and putting it to the best use:

- **First:** Distinguish the key issues around which the dialogue is held from the marginal ones, and focus all attention on essential aspects;
- **Second:** Observe frankness and simplicity in the discussion, conveying a genuine desire to reach the truth and share it with the other. Imam ach-Chafei says in this regard: *"I never held a debate with anyone without praying for the truth to come out of their mouth."*

Are there other aspects you would like to add to the art of communication?

Second: The art of listening

What fundamentals of the art of listening make it crucial to successful communication?

The Quran considers the sense of hearing one of the greatest blessings bestowed on Man, going so far as to give it precedence over that of sight, for the blind can know God through hearing while the hearing-impaired cannot discover God through sight alone. Allah says in this regard: ***[It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when ye knew nothing; and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affections: that ye may give thanks (to Allah).]*** (An-Nahl: 78).

Roscoe Drummond said that if he was doomed to lose all his skills and faculties and had the possibility of keeping one only, he would not hesitate to choose the ability to speak because through speaking he can quickly recover the others.

When asked about the best ability a successful businessmen could have, a famous businessman replied that it was good listening. He added that he would like to create a school he would call the school of effective listening for those who wish to manage a group of people.

It is said: "He who knows how to listen profits the quickest".

Some people believe that listening is the key quality needed for conflict resolution in all areas. Thus, for our interlocutor to feel that he is shown the amount of consideration and respect due to him, he must feel that he is listened to, that efforts are made to understand what he says and appreciate his interest. In this regard, it is important to consider the following:

- Respect the personality of the interlocutor,
- Give him the opportunity and time needed to express himself,
- Know how to maintain self-control.

Importance of respecting the person of the interlocutor

It is important to respect and remain cordial towards the interlocutor not avoid antagonizing him. Contempt must also be avoided as it weakens arguments and irks the interlocutor. Respect means listening to the other person without too many interruptions until he has made his point before offering a response.

Why give the interlocutor ample time to express himself?

It is essential to give the interlocutor the opportunity and time to express himself and share his expectations, problems and concerns, and to avoid interrupting or contradicting him altogether before finishing. Only then does one provide a response.

How important is restraint during dialogue?

To maintain restraint during a dialogue is to refrain from giving your opinion before attentively listening to the other party. In fact, a measured and slow pace when you express your opinion denotes respect for yourself and for others.

Patience and restraint enhance trust. They prompt respect for the person and the holder of an opinion. It is an explicit and frank invitation to understanding and constructive cooperation.

If our desire is to engage in fruitful communication and constructive cooperation, we must endeavor, as much as possible, to lend our listeners an attentive ear, be a listener before being an orator, to avoid interrupting him

shouting at him. Listening, in the same way as speaking, is an effective means of understanding and bonding with others.

Do you have other ideas on the art of listening that you would like to add to the above?

Third: Impediments to communication

1. Which factors hinder communication?

The following impediments stand in the way of good communication and understanding:

- Bias for opinions, doctrines, ideas and people,
- Loathsome hypocrisy and obduracy in debating,
- Barriers to communication,
- Communication breakdown causes.

How does bias impede dialogue?

Bias for opinions, doctrines, ideas and people is an age-old phenomenon intrinsic to human societies. The phenomenon is an aberration when it has no moral grounds such as the defense of the law or of its champions.

Bias stems from the false belief that the individual has a monopoly over what is right. The intolerant person does not question the object of his intolerance but accepts it as it is, and as a result can only communicate with those who echo his own theories.

When to refrain from arguing and how to argue?

The intention behind engaging a person in debate is not to claim victory at the expense of the truth. Argumentativeness in itself is disagreeable and should be avoided altogether. If there is no avoiding an argument, the interaction with the other party must be carried out in the best possible way: [***And argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious.***] (*An-Nahl*: 125). In other words, the individual must avoid sterile, crude and disrespectful arguments and use his best argumentation style. If the discussion reaches an

impasse, it must be ended, as the following *hadith* recommends: “I guarantee a house in paradise to he who gives up argumentativeness even if he is right.”⁽³⁶⁾ “If people stray from my path after having embraced it, they would have given in to controversy and contention.”⁽³⁷⁾

What are communication impediments?

Barriers to communication can be summarized in the following: fear, shyness, anger and anxiety, complaisance, vain talk, long-windedness, ignorance of the subject, use of incomprehensible words for the listener, such as in French, English or other languages, raising the voice unreasonably, shouting, engaging in self-praise and disregard for the truth.

What are communication breakers?

Among communication breakers we find basing one's arguments on prejudices and stereotypes on communities and their creeds. These prejudices favor generalization of the characteristics and traits of a community to all those belonging to it, when the members of this community give no weight to these characteristics or may even reject them altogether.

In its 1999 report, the American Association of Colleges and Employers listed the key personal skills needed to hire an employee. Topping the list of these skills was communication.

Whenever two people are alienated from each other on these grounds, or are neglectful of family visits or even of greeting their co-workers or neighbors, verbal communication suffers as a result of the lack of visual and sensory interaction.

(36) Narrated by Abu Daoud on a good chain of narration.

(37) Narrated and authenticated by al-Tirmidi.

How can the Imam use communication to make a success of his *daa'wa* and educational mission?

First	Have an open personality in order to be close to people's hearts. The community would turn to him about their problems and seek his counsel regarding their religious and social concerns.
Second	Use body language in the form of a benevolent countenance, a smile, a greeting and enquiring about people's affairs as a prelude to establishing an intellectual rapport that translates into a balanced and constructive dialogue.
Third	Lead by example in courteous speech, delivering well-turned out sermons, speeches and counsel, but also by listening to those searching for answers or for the right path and religious knowledge.

▪ Interacting with the People of the Book

What are the limits of lawful interaction with the People of the Book?

The legitimacy and limits of interaction with the People of the Book are set forth in the Quran as well as by Muslim scholars, both former and modern, and can be summarized as follows:

From the Holy Quran:

[There is for you an excellent example (to follow) in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people: "We are clear of you and of whatever ye worship besides Allah. We have rejected you, and there has arisen, between us and you, enmity and hatred for ever,- unless ye believe in Allah and Him alone": But not when Abraham said to his father: "I will pray for forgiveness for thee, though I have no power (to get) aught on thy behalf from Allah." (They prayed): "Our Lord! in Thee do we trust, and to Thee do we turn in repentance: to Thee is (our) Final Goal.] (Al-Mumtahana: 4)

Peaceful interaction with the unbelievers entails not sanctioning their atheism though they may have to deal with the religious reality since they are accountable for their misguided beliefs. These relations may, however, require addressing this religious divergence with the necessary rigor.

[Our Lord! Make us not a (test and) trial for the Unbelievers, but forgive us, our Lord! for Thou art the Exalted in Might, the Wise. There was indeed in them an excellent example for you to follow,- for those whose hope is in Allah and in the Last Day. But if any turn away, truly Allah is Free of all Wants, Worthy of all Praise. It may be that Allah will grant love (and friendship) between you and those whom ye (now) hold as enemies. For Allah has power (over all things); And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.] (Al-Mumtahana: 5-7).

No believer would wish to motivate unbelievers into developing a stronger attachment to their atheism, and hopes instead to be the reason for their guidance onto the righteous path. However, this charitable disposition towards them does not necessarily imply acceptance of their religious misguidance. The common love and affection advocated among Muslims applies to them insofar as they choose to become believers. It is thus necessary to keep in mind the possibility that their hostility may turn into friendship, and thus hostility towards them must not be exaggerated even if its grounds are valid, to keep the door open for those who wish to embrace faith.

[Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loveth those who are just. Allah only forbids you, with regard to those who fight you for (your) Faith, and drive you out of your homes, and support (others) in driving you out, from turning to them (for friendship and protection). It is such as turn to them (in these circumstances), that do wrong.] (Al-Mumtahana: 8-9).

Allah does not forbid believers to treat with beneficence the disbelievers who do not fight Muslims or drive them out of their homes on account of their religion. Allah (SWT) prefers the Muslim to remain open to others, regardless of their orientations that may differ wholly or partly from Islam, or even wish them good and co-operate with them in righteousness, rapprochement and mutual acquaintance.

The prohibition applies instead to those who are hostile to Muslims and drive them out of their homes or help in this, on the grounds of their being Muslims. These should never be taken as allies, and those who turn to them for this would be considered as transgressors.

Words of former scholars:

Ibn al-Subki says: "*Jews and Christians have filled every corner of the land. Which of you has stood up to talk to them and guide them? They are the dhimmis in Muslim countries! You neglect them while employing them and seeking medical care from them, yet no scholar among you spends even an hour discussing with a dhimmi the foundations of religion, in the hope that Allah will guide this dhimmi on the right path through your endeavors.*

It is your religious obligation to devote some of your efforts to this endeavor. It is regrettable that despite the number of Muslim scholars in our countries, no dhimmi has been called in a debate to join Islam thanks to them. Those who have converted to Islam have done so by guidance from Allah (SWT) or for some other worldly purpose."

**(Mu'eed al-Ni'am wa Mubeed al-Niqam, pp. 7-75
(Ru'ya Shar'iya fi al-Jidal wa al-Hiwar maa Ahl al-Kitab, 9/1)**

The words above reveal some essential elements in the relationship of Muslims with the People of the Book who live in their midst and provide guidelines on the relationship with the followers of other religions. These elements can be summarized in the following:

- Consider the responsibility of calling to Islam as general and targeting all non-Muslims, practicing or non-practicing believers. Islam is the true religion, the haven towards which humanity turns to improve life on earth and guarantee happiness in the afterlife, the religion that the Lord of the Worlds has accepted for all humanity and exhorted them to follow so that they may succeed and attain the best of the two worlds: [***Those who believe (in the Quran), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians,- any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.***] (Al-Baqara: 62).

Among the conditions to be met in calling non-Muslims to Islam we find:

- Introduce Islam to anyone who expresses a desire to know about it first, then to those from whom a degree of responsiveness may be expected and who are not blindly attached to their religion;
- Ensure that the call to Islam is rich in wise words and good advice, truthfully presents the facts of religion, with neither excess nor omission, and emphasizes the status of all the prophets and messengers and their messages. All these messages have one and the same source, Allah (Lord of the Two Worlds), and the same purpose, *Tawhid* (monotheism), the veneration of Allah and the application of His law in relationships and morals. When reflected in the actions of Muslims in general, and *du'ats* in particular, these values and morals facilitate the call to Islam and the presentation of irrefutable proofs to persuade non-Muslims;
- Target in this call adults who are in control of their life and ready to assume the full responsibility of embracing Islam and voluntarily surrendering their original religion.

Words from modern scholars:

Sheikh Youssef al-Qaradawi says:

On the matter of rapprochement and dialogue using the best argument it is worth mentioning the points of agreement, not the points of divergence.

Zealots claim that Muslims have nothing in common with Jews and Christians since we label the latter as atheists and accuse them of altering the word of God.

This is a wrong interpretation of Islam's position towards these people. Why did Allah allow sharing meals with them and marrying from them? How is it that Islam allowed a Muslim to take as his wife and mother of his children a woman from the People of the Book? This means that the grandparents and uncles of his children may be among the People of the Book, with all the rights due to them on grounds of blood ties ...

He then called upon Muslims to join hands with the People of the Book in confronting the enemies of faith, the advocates of apostasy and permissiveness, and the champions of materialism, nudity, sexual liberation and perversion, abortion, and gay marriages.

So there is no harm in standing as a united front with the People of the Book against those who seek mankind's perdition through their misguided preaching and actions, dragging them down from the purity of humanity to the abyss of animalism.

Be united in the defense of justice, the meek and the oppressed of the world, such as in Palestine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Kashmir, or the repression of the people of color in America and elsewhere, but also to defend those subjugated by the unjust and the arrogant, seeking to enslave the servants of God.

Islam fights injustice and defends the oppressed, irrespective of their race or religion.

The Prophet (PBUH) was party to *Hilf al-Fudul* (the Alliance of *al-Fudul*), an alliance formed to defend the oppressed and their rights.

(Islam and the Other: The Solution is Dialogue, page 54).

The above quotation enables us to glean the following essential points on dialogue with the People of the Book:

When the other party takes pride in and attachment to their religion, dialogue must focus on the points of commonality between religions and the principles and interests they share.

One of the objectives of interreligious dialogue is to foster the acceptance by each party of the other, and expand the scope of rapprochement as widely as allowed by these religions. Dialogue also breaks down the long-standing dividing walls of tension and fear.

Islam does not urge the Muslim to declare the polytheist an enemy on the grounds of his belief in many gods, nor of the People of the Book on account

of their religion. Divine law enjoins us instead to recognize the right to belief, as clearly stated in this Quranic verse: [**Say: O ye that reject Faith! I worship not that which ye worship, Nor will ye worship that which I worship. And I will not worship that which ye have been wont to worship, Nor will ye worship that which I worship. To you be your Way, and to me mine.**] (*Al-Kafirun*: 1-6). In the Sunnah, Asmaa Bent Abu Bakr reported: “*My mother who was a polytheist came to see me during the truce concluded by the Prophet with Quraish. I consulted the Prophet and said to him: ‘O Messenger of Allah, my mother wishes to see me, must I fulfill my blood obligations to her?’ ‘Yes,’ answered the Prophet: ‘fulfill your obligations towards her.’*”⁽³⁸⁾

He ordained that People of the Book be treated according to Islam’s morals and teachings which consider them as the closest and most worthy of the benevolence and favor of Muslims. One *hadith* says in this regard: “*On the day of Judgment, I shall stand against those who oppressed a person who had made a pact (with the Muslims), denigrated him, compelled him to do what was beyond his abilities or deprived him of something against his will*”.⁽³⁹⁾

It is only acceptable to treat them as enemies if they declare hostility towards Muslims and undermine their right to exercise their religion and live in peace and security, or if Islam is targeted with distortions and derision.

Sheikh Abdullah Ben Bayah:

Dr. Sheikh Abdullah Ben Bayah, Vice President of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, President of the Global Centre for Renewal and Guidance, member of the Islamic Fiqh Council and former Minister of Justice of Mauritania, was asked for his opinion on the following subject:

(38) Reported by the two sheikhs.

(39) *Sunan Abu Daoud*, categorized by al-Albani as having a passable chain of narration.

Recently, many meetings and dialogues have taken place between Muslim and Jewish religious leaders in France and Britain by way of coordination towards peaceful coexistence and the interests imposed by the conditions of living in the West. How are these debates perceived by our *du'ats* and scholars in the Islamic East? Will they affect our political reality in light of the political crisis of Israeli occupation and arrogance towards our brothers in Palestine? And to what extent should we accept such dialogues? Will the Muslims ultimately gain anything from this dialogue?

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His answer was as follows:

It is impossible to issue one blanket judgment on all dialogues with the Jews. A dialogue that takes place between Muslim communities in Europe and America with the Jews of these countries is normal, especially if they are citizens of the same country. Dialogue between them is possible as it is based on the principles of co-existence, citizenship and common interests and aspires to the stability and peace of their countries.

The issue of dialogue between Muslims and Jews in the Arab world is different. It depends on the assessments of the countries and how Jews approach the Palestinian cause. These countries must reflect on the idea of starting a dialogue with the Jews.

In my opinion, the issue of dialogue depends on the appreciation made by the scholars and rulers of the Arab and Islamic world. Dialogue per se is not an issue, but dialogue with the Jews necessitates a lot of perseverance and patience so that Muslims do not fall into the trap of cheap propaganda that is of little if no value for them, whether this dialogue is initiated by international Jewish organizations or governmental ones.

Muslims must distinguish between dialogue with the Jews who violated our land and our sanctities, and the Jews who oppose this occupation. Though they are few to have this humanitarian approach, there are some Jews around

the world who stand strongly against Israeli occupation and the Zionist project in the region. There is nothing wrong with opening a constructive dialogue with them to further the fulfillment of Muslim interests. The same applies to the dialogue of Muslim minorities in the West with Jewish fellow citizens. There is nothing embarrassing in these dialogues either. Opening a direct dialogue with those Jews who usurped our land is left to the discretion of the rulers and scholars in Islamic countries and what interest for Islam and Muslims and for the cause of Palestine they perceive, far from all personal agendas.

What are the general conclusions to be drawn about dialogue in Islam?

- Islam calls for dialogue and urges Muslims to engage in a dialogue among themselves as well as with the followers of other religions;
- Dialogue is a true Islamic approach adopted in preaching, teaching, furthering mutual understanding and overcoming difficulties;
- Dialogue is a means to bring what is right and true to the fore and persuade people.

The Function and Foundations of *Daa'wa*

▪ The *Imam's* responsibility in *daa'wa*

The *Imam's* traditional *daa'wa* function was limited to *khutbas* and Friday sermons. What areas of preaching exist outside this framework?

It is indisputable that an *Imam's* responsibility in *daa'wa* is closely linked to his own qualities of efficiency and dynamism, thanks to which he can shine and give the necessary radiance to the mosque, its surroundings, and even beyond the city. The importance of this duty varies depending on people's needs and conditions, but has evolved with the recent evolution of communication means and their great advances. This responsibility can also expand to include more people than those attending the mosque's services. The following table highlights factors that can help the *Imam* in fulfilling his *daa'wa* duties:

Personal traits required in the <i>Imam</i> exercising <i>daa'wa</i>
A heightened sense of the <i>daa'wa</i> duty - leading by example-mastering jurisprudential sciences -speech and communication skills- opening up to the culture of his times and having good understanding of human crises.
People's needs
Low attendance of the mosque - raising awareness of the merits of good marital relations and the good upbringing of children -raising awareness of the brotherliness duties and shunning discord - correcting the understanding and practice of religion - coping with common behavioral hazards - improving the image of the pious Muslim in society.
Advances in communication methods
Printing educational booklets - recording lessons and sermons on CDs - using the internet to broaden the base of listeners – copying <i>khutbas</i> and sermons on paper to enable better assimilation - using computers in developing different <i>daa'wa</i> subjects.

Following are some *daa'wa* functions that the *Imam* can add to those of the Friday prayer and *khutba*, as often as circumstances and means allow it:

- *Fatwas*,
- Teaching Quran and jurisprudential sciences,
- Courses, conferences and seminars,
- Debates, counseling and sermons,
- Various charitable and social solidarity activities,
- *Daa'wa* initiatives outside the mosque.

▪ **Parallel educational, *daa'wa* and cultural activities**

Following are some examples of this type of activity:

- Deliver lectures of varying lengths between the call to prayer and the *Iqamah* of the evening prayer, or between Maghrib and *Ishaa*, depending on the type and circumstances of the beneficiaries;

- Teach religious sciences to students of an Islamic law school affiliated to the mosque. The *Imam* can be involved in the administrative supervision of this school as part of a broader committee where each member would have a specific mission;
- Improvise sermons after the mandatory prayers, addressing prominent behavioral dysfunctions;
- Hold weekly, monthly or quarterly conferences and invite teachers and sheikhs to supervise them;
- Organize meetings to answer people's questions placed in a suggestions box specially set up for this purpose, whether these questions relate to religious or behavioral issues;
- Hold academic symposia to address general or specific issues;
- Distribute booklets, brochures and sensitization videos to rectify certain ideas and practices;
- The mosque's public library: This library must contain audio-visual CDs by prominent reciters and preachers, hymns and religious songs (*Ibtihalat*), works in different formats and languages intended for children, young people, women, the general public, scholars and *fiqh* students. Reading sessions can be held to publicize the contents of the library under the supervision of its custodian, and part of these contents would be made available for lending. Reading sessions would also be organized for the mosque attendees where book readings are organized to encourage people to read.
- Organize cultural competitions for children, youth and elderly people among the mosque's users, especially during holidays and religious occasions, and award prizes to encourage people to read. Beautiful gifts can be awarded to children attending the mosque to encourage them to come more often;
- Create reflection seminars on the Holy Quran, both for adults and children, to learn the basics of its recitation and chanting, to memorize certain parts of the Quran and the Sunnah, along with the exegesis of some *hadiths*, provided that the supervision of such activities is entrusted to qualified people;

- Organize a meeting with a 'Guest of the Month' to which a scholar, preacher or thinker is invited to deliver a talk, and prepare questions for him to benefit the audience. The meeting can also take the form of an open question-and-answer session;
- Organize a periodic retreat at the mosque, as well as in the last ten days of Ramadan;
- Organize outings and trips to natural and historical sites, supervised by the *Imam* and some preachers and educators, as part of a rich program combining scientific benefit and visual pleasure in contemplating the marvels of God's creation on earth, along with leisurely activities such as poetic readings, anecdotes, games, and lawful recreational activities.

How to carry out these time and effort consuming activities?

The diversity of educational, *daa'wa* and cultural activities that can be organized within the mosque and its various facilities necessitates the adoption of a plan that can sustainably accommodate many of these activities. The *Imam* is not expected to carry out all these tasks by himself if they are to be carried out well and durably. He has instead to use the material and human resources available to him as per his status within the mosque and which can only be one of the following:

When the Imam chairs the mosque's steering committee

In this case, the *Imam* has a broad prerogative to program activities and develop practical action plans for their implementation. He benefits from the assistance of other committee members, as determined by the qualifications and interests of each. Thus, he takes charge of the cultural and academic aspect, eliciting the help of some of the academic and cultural profiles among the mosque's users or in and around the city, to ensure continuity and prevent failure and interruptions.

The higher the number of collaborators and spaces available within the mosque's environment, the more activities can be carried out in quality and quantity. For example, sub-committees can be created to match the tasks allocated to them:

- Steering, Planning and Programming Committee
- Committee of Scientific and Cultural Activities, Trips and Celebrations
- Committee of Education, Training and Women's Activities
- Committee of Lighting, Acoustics and Venue Organization
- Committee of Hygiene, Gardening and Emergency Repairs
- Equipment and Construction Committee
- Committee of Economics and Financial Management
- Committee of Information, Announcements, Directives, Posters and Documentation of Sermons, Lectures and Cultural Activities

Two or more sub-committees can be merged into a single one, and a committee may be divided into two or three sub-committees. Ad-hoc committees can also be created as per the available human resources and their willingness to participate in the development of the mosque's work and its radiance.

When an administrative committee supervises the mosque's administration besides the Imam

When a committee supervises the management of the mosque and the *Imam* is a prominent member of it, its chair is often the one who manages activities, convenes and chairs meetings. In view of his position, the *Imam's* decisions carry executive power, and his opinion would tip the balance in case of a dispute.

In this case, the *Imam* is expected to work towards strengthening his position within the committee by advising it and enriching it with his views and good suggestions. These should reflect an Islamic vision that is supportive of all the decisions of the committee and its orientations. The *Imam* should not step back and withhold his opinion. Rather, he should always be a proactive and flexible interlocutor in order to gain the trust of the Committee and prove his ability to hold a privileged position within this committee.

Thus, the entire committee would be mobilized to implement the announced program and everything the *Imam* suggests and endorses, making him practically the voice that is heard and the opinion that is heeded.

When a management committee administers the mosque without the Imam's involvement

If the *Imam* finds himself outside the committee managing the mosque, he should not withhold his suggestions and remarks which flow in the direction of serving the mosque and achieving tangible benefits for its users. This role would make the committee dependent upon him in its management and other various prerogatives and may prompt it to involve him in its responsibilities and integrate him as a key player.

Certain mosque steering committees do not allow the *Imam* as a member because they consider the evaluation of his performance and addressing any complaints from the worshipers about him as one of the key issues they have to examine and resolve. The presence of the *Imam* within the steering committee would in this case constitute an obstacle to its functioning in all objectivity. However, he can be solicited in instances other than this to benefit from his opinion in general and his religious expertise in particular.

Sometimes, addressing issues where the *Imam* himself may be the subject of criticism in his own presence, in an atmosphere of frankness and honesty, could help establish a culture of dialogue and counsel and strengthen the values of justice, equity and constructive criticism.

Some of the committees pay a salary to the *Imam* and may use this as leverage to force him to acquiesce to its views which are often driven by passion, sectarian proclivities and ignorance of religion and its specifics. In such situations, it is the responsibility of the *Imam* to correct the committee's perceptions and redress its course using the religious knowledge and wisdom Allah bestowed on him, and the values of tolerance that accommodate all people despite their disparate degrees of Charia understanding and their attachment to it, as well as his ability to formulate sincere invocations to Allah in ways that meet all the conditions of response from Allah.

▪ Openness onto the mosque's environment and interaction with different social categories

What activities and means can guarantee openness and interaction?

Since the dawn of Islam, *imams* have strived to interact with the residents of their neighborhoods, take an interest in their problems and share in their

joys and sorrows. *Imams* are invited to marriages, then to parties celebrating births. They tend to children's education by teaching them the Quran and other religious knowledge. The *Imam* intervenes to resolve marital disputes and to reconcile children with their parents. *Imams* are involved in conflict resolution thanks to their knowledge of Islamic law, as well as their wisdom and understanding of human nature and the secrets of life.

Their presence is central at funerals, as well as when illness or calamities strike. They console the sick and pray for them. They wash the dead, and shroud them, pray for them and for the pardon of their sins. Their counsel is sought by individuals and families when confronted to worries and problems.

Following are some examples of the functions the *Imam* performs:

- Enquire about the conditions of the mosque's users, acquaint himself with the poor and the needy and bring their situation to the attention of the rich and of charitable institutions to help them;
- Resolve disputes and eliminate causes of tension, soliciting in this endeavor the help of the neighborhood's notables;
- Organize periodic meetings with the faithful at the mosque and in some houses to discuss the problems of the neighborhood and anything affecting the community;
- Create a social committee to publish community news, post these on the notice board inside the mosque or at its entrance, with photos of the persons concerned. The news could be about a journey abroad, a wedding, a pilgrimage or 'Umra, a sick person either at home or in hospital, a death or a car accident, as well as other good or bad news. This would enable people to do the necessary towards the affected persons, either congratulating them, visiting them, consoling them, or supporting them;
- Visit those who do not attend the communal prayers but live close to the mosque, and remind them of the benefits of collective prayers and their psychological and social virtues;
- Communicate directly with some of the mosque users, seek their news, offer them useful advice to overcome the worries and difficulties they face, and answer their religious and social questions;

- Endeavor to spread the values of counseling, the duty to command what is good and warn against the unlawful within the community, especially in light of the spreading abominations. To this end, it is necessary to form a group of three persons headed by the *Imam*. The group would walk about in the neighborhood and chat to people, and in the process offer them the necessary advice, with gentle words, genuine affection and smiling faces;
- Encourage the talented among the faithful with the necessary attention and put their talents to contribution in preaching and reform actions within the neighborhood;
- Organize solidarity days during religious occasions to collect donations in the form of clothing, furniture and new household equipment, food products, textbooks and cultural books, as well as zakat and financial donations. The next step is to identify the real needs of the poor families that will receive these alms, setting priorities as per these needs. The distribution takes place during a general ceremony, with sermons delivered on the culture and benefits of spending on the poor, accompanied by religious chants and children's songs that express joy and happiness;
- Organize community celebrations on the second day of festivals and religious occasions, with lectures highlighting the merit and special character of the occasion and reading out of poems. These would also provide an opportunity for children to read poems, sing, present constructive theatrical performances and showcase their poetic and literary talents.

These are some samples of the activities that the *Imam* can supervise, suggest, or contribute in their supervision.

CHAPTER FIVE

**FUNDAMENTALS OF THE
ADMINISTRATIVE AND
LEGAL CULTURE**

Introduction

Every profession requires a minimum of organization and planning that facilitates the proper implementation of its various tasks. No institution, large or small, can function properly without a sound administrative management.

Given the expansion of the mosque's activities and their growing importance, the *Imam* must have a good sense of management and an administrative and legal culture that can boost his management and supervisory skills, and thus guarantee the success of his actions.

I. The administrative aspect

▪ Work and organization

What is the relationship between work and organization?

Work consists of a series of procedural measures that are subject to a specific system to be understood and applied rigorously. The more numerous and simultaneous the tasks are, the more their execution requires an organizational effort that unfolds in line with a well devised plan that meets specific requirements and conditions. Priority is usually given to activities of a pressing nature, classified according to a scale of importance, and their execution is aimed at achieving the greatest number of tasks with less effort and in shorter times.

How is order seen from the Islamic perspective?

Islam invited Man to ponder the miraculous order underlying the creation of the universe and all creatures, and to draw lessons that attest to the wisdom, power and greatness of the Creator. Order embodies the organizer, just as creation speaks to the creator and innovation is a reflection of the innovator.

The Quran draws Man's attention to the immense precision and miraculous organization of the universe: [***He Who created the seven heavens one above another: No want of proportion wilt thou see in the Creation of ((Allah))***]

***Most Gracious. So turn thy vision again: seest thou any flaw? Again turn thy vision a second time: (thy) vision will come back to thee dull and discomfited, in a state worn out.] (Al-Mulk: 3-4); [Never did We destroy a population that had not a term decreed and assigned beforehand. Neither can a people anticipate its term, nor delay it.] (Al-Hijr: 4-5); [It is not permitted to the Sun to catch up the Moon, nor can the Night outstrip the Day: Each (just) swims along in (its own) orbit (according to Law).” (Ya-Sin: 40); [Thou seest the mountains and thinkest them firmly fixed: but they shall pass away as the clouds pass away: (such is) the artistry of Allah, who disposes of all things in perfect order: for he is well acquainted with all that ye do!]* (An-Naml: 88).**

Besides pondering this miraculous cosmic order, Man was also called upon to apply this order and method through the prescribed rites of worship, such as prayer, fasting, zakat, pilgrimage, the evocation of Allah’s names...

Praying, for example, involves spiritual preparation, beginning with professing that there is no God but Allah and that Mohammed is His Messenger. This is followed by the intention to perform the prayer, whether it is an obligatory prayer or one that was set by the Sunnah and reflects the desire to show sincere obedience to Allah. Then there is the conditional action of purification according to well established rules, without excess but also without omissions, ensuring in the process the cleanliness of clothes and place. Next is the act of prayer itself, with its form and phrasing and its accomplishment according to a predetermined order, an order that can be neither transgressed nor disregarded. In case of forgetfulness or omission, the individual must perform *Sujud al-Sahw* (prostration compensating for distraction), unless the omission affects a fundamental pillar of prayer, in which case the person must redo his prayer as soon as he becomes aware of the omission. Any deliberate digression invalidates the prayer.

The communal prayer is performed under the office of the *Imam* in close and well-ordered ranks. If anyone precedes the *Imam* in rank, he voluntarily invalidates his own prayer, and the one who leaves the rank and disturbs its order commits a sin. One of the duties incumbent upon the *Imam* is to remind the faithful to respect the alignment of ranks and the preservation of their order.

What about the social order?

Islam gives social order special attention. It establishes a link between the organization of governance or rule and the protection of religion and worldly matters, and the normal process of individual and collective affairs. In fact, without an *Imam* to hold the reins of power and manage public affairs, we cannot expect order in any dimensions, small or important, of people's lives.

It is reported that 'Omar, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "*There is no Islam without the community, and no community can exist without a ruler, and no rule can exist without obedience. He who has been appointed by people on account of his knowledge and religion, will be useful to himself and to others, and he whom people appoint to govern them on other grounds shall bring perdition upon himself and upon others*".⁽⁴⁰⁾

Islam praises order and organization in all things, insignificant and important. These notions must be embedded in minds and inspire all actions. The Messenger (PBUH) postulated that if three people embark on a trip together, they must appoint one of them as a leader, obey his orders since he will assume the responsibility of their safety and tranquility and the organization of their affairs. This way, differences of opinion would not divide them and provoke disputes among them until they reach their own clans.⁽⁴¹⁾

The duty of governing is most important in Islam. But if the practice of religion remains the most sacred obligation that Allah has imposed on people, this obligation cannot take shape without the establishment of governance and order in society. Sheikh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyya says: "*Let it be known that governing people and managing their affairs is one of the noblest duties of religion. Without it, neither religion nor material life can exist. Indeed, the wellbeing and interests of human beings can only be served through their association, an association born out of their need for each other, and any*

(40) *Sunan ad-Darimi*, chapter on *Dhahab al-'Ilm*.

(41) 'Omar Ibn al-Khattab said: "*If three people are together let them appoint one of them as an emir, as commanded by the Messenger.*" Reported in *al-Mustadrak*, quoting the two *Sahihs*. This is an authentic *hadith* narrated by the two Sheikhs though they did not extract or cite it.

association of people needs a leader, so much so that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "If three people go on a journey together, they must appoint one of them as their leader."⁽⁴²⁾

After the Prophet's death, the Muslims delayed his burial until the election of his successor, Abu Bakr, for fear of remaining, be it for a single hour, without someone to keep law and order in the Islamic State.

▪ Administrative training

What is the meaning and purpose of administration?

Administration refers to the task of planning, organizing and allocating human and material resources to achieve pre-established goals.

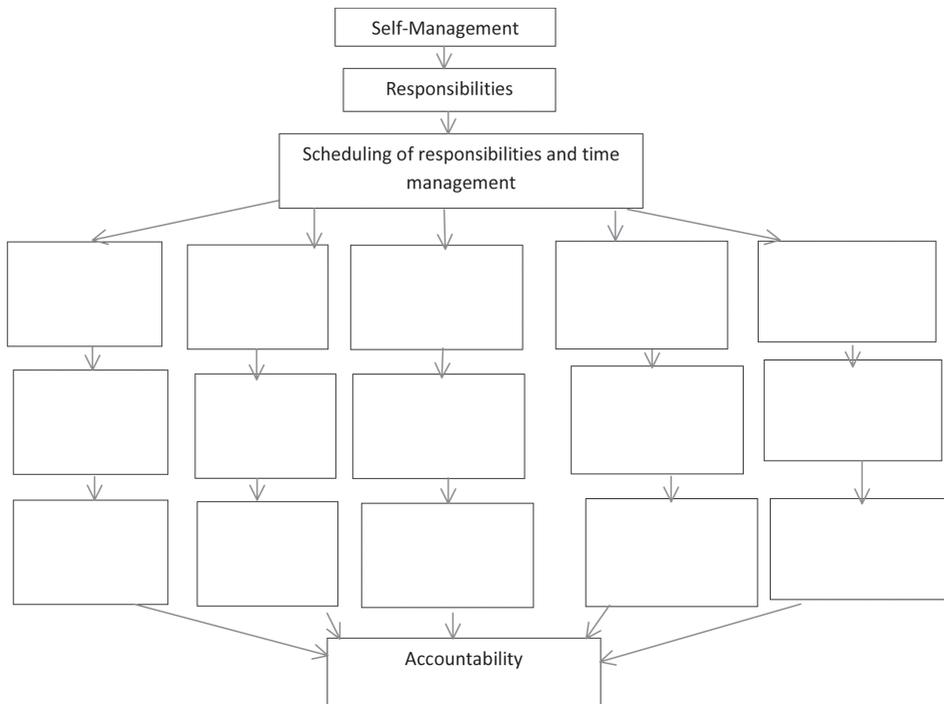
The science of management has only recently emerged, although administration, in the sense of general business management, is a concept as old as humanity itself. Frederick Taylor was among the first to lay the foundations of this science in 1911.⁽⁴³⁾

Taylor says that in today's world, the human being must engage in self-management before and after fulfilling the other managerial tasks assigned to him. What are the axes of self-management?

There is no doubt that success in carrying out administrative and other functions or performing everyday tasks depends both on the individual's sense of responsibility and his ability to organize himself or herself and manage personal affairs. The individual must know how to organize his ideas, set his goals, master his instincts and feelings, govern his faculties and energy and direct them in such a way that his profits are preserved, even fructified, and that failures and obstacles are minimized. Self-management areas can be summarized in the following graphic:

(42) Sheikh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyya: *As-Siyassa ash-Shar'iyya*. 1st edition, Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Waqfs, Daa'wa and Orientation, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 1418H, page 168.

(43) Ahmed Aouzi: *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Educational Sciences*. Maktba'at al-Najah, Casablanca, 1st edition, 1427H (2006).



How important is it to determine responsibilities in self-management and how to do so?

Organizational and administrative functions are normally inseparable from the exercise of responsibility. Determining the various levels of responsibility as well as the people to carry them out and their specific attributions are thus at the heart of organization and management. The key responsibilities of the director or manager is to organize and manage, and his most salient attribute is to be in charge of organization and management, whether he is a king or head of state or working at lower echelons of the organizational ladder.

Administration owes its existence to that of responsibilities, requiring those who perform them to do so to the fullest so as to preserve the interests of country and people and preempt anarchy and the spread of corruption in society. This assertion is confirmed in such verses as: **[When We decide to destroy a population, We (first) send a definite order to those among them who are given the good things of this life and yet transgress; so that the word is proved true against them: then (it is) We destroy them**

utterly.] (*Al-Israa*: 16). If the Arabic verb 'amarna' is read with emphasis on the letter 'm' as in 'ammarna', meaning 'we put them in charge' and they failed in honoring the trust thus placed in them, they invite destruction upon themselves and their subjects. Along the same line, a man asked the Messenger (PBUH) about the end of times. The Prophet replied: "When honesty is lost, then wait for the Hour." He was asked, "How will honesty be lost, O Allah's Apostle?" He said, "When authority is given to those who do not deserve it, then wait for the Hour."⁽⁴⁴⁾ This *hadith* shows that good governance is the basis of security and rectitude, but only when this governance is entrusted to people with integrity and a sense of responsibility.

Similarly, an individual cannot lead and manage others if he fails to manage himself and lacks the sense of responsibility and of appreciation for the value of trust placed in him.

When a civil servant lacks integrity and honesty and has no respect for a commitment, a promise, an agreement or an obligation, this only leads to loss of rights and forsaken trust.

Administrative Responsibility in Islam, p. 14

The first step to take before we tackle self-management and the management of others is to take cognizance of our own responsibility in this life, as determined by our Creator in His book and by His Messenger: [***Blessed be He in Whose hands is Dominion: and He over all things Hath Power. He Who created Death and Life that He may try which of you is best in deed: and He is the Exalted in Might Oft-Forgiving.***] (*Al-Mulk*: 1-2). Ponder also the verse: [***O ye who believe! Fear Allah and let every soul look to what (provision) he has sent forth for the morrow. Yea fear Allah: for Allah is well-acquainted with (all) that ye do.***] (*Al-Hashr*: 18), and: [***The (Qur'an) is indeed the Message for thee and for thy people; and soon shall ye (all) be brought to account.***] (*Az-Zukhruf*: 44).

(44) *Sahih al-Bukhari*.

Cognizant of the weight of the mission (*amana*) entrusted to him by the Almighty Allah, Man can draw the broad lines of his ultimate and stage-related objectives with precision and clarity. These determine his priorities and choices in all their dimensions and ramifications, both in adhering to the obligatory and supererogatory prescriptions of religion, refraining from the unlawful and the frowned upon, and performing the collective and voluntary duties through which Man aspires to the highest planes in the Hereafter.

To ponder these main objectives and commit them to memory is not enough. They have to be carefully formulated, written down in bold letters, and perhaps even hung somewhere quite visible in the house.

Considered the most knowledgeable and most conscious of this general human responsibility's weight and prerequisites, the *Imam* carries a much greater responsibility than all others, namely that of educating people about their religious responsibilities on earth and how to perform them in a way that pleases Allah and grants them reward in this world and in the hereafter.

Imams need to recognize the weight of this noble mission. They must also endeavor to organize and manage their lives in such a way as to properly accomplish this weighty duty and be worthy of the blessed reward, in this world and in the next.

Do you think it is necessary to remind yourself of the greatness of the responsibility entrusted to you?

What needs to be considered in planning responsibilities?

Scheduling responsibilities

To schedule the various responsibilities, keeping in mind the time frames and efforts that can be expended in this regard, the following criteria may be applied:

- After defining one's mission, inspired from the duty of vice regency on earth, this mission can be broken down into responsibilities, each with a set implementation time frame: ten years, one year, three months, one month, one week, one day, one hour, etc.
- Prioritize responsibilities according to their importance and as dictated by real circumstances,
- Determine the efforts and time required for each responsibility,

- Distinguish between permanent and temporary responsibilities, and between those with fixed deadlines and those that may be postponed,
- Establish achievement indicators and a self-evaluation timetable,
- Develop quarterly, weekly and daily activity matrixes, while remaining flexible to deal with unforeseen changes,
- Keep record of notes made during the actual implementation of activities. These notes will be used to amend the current program and develop future ones.

Health responsibility

How to be health responsible?

Health, both physical and mental, is essential to the proper accomplishment of responsibilities, hence the need to give it the attention it deserves in order to preserve dynamism and readiness to effectively accomplish all obligations.

The following suggestions may be made in this regard:

1. Psychological health

Tending to one's psychological health involves the following:

- Undertake spiritual purification by performing obligations and Sunan, dedicating a daily session for reading and pondering the Quran, continuously evoking Allah and various morning and evening prayers. It is also important to meditate Allah's divine words and His bounty, to fear Him and respect His prescriptions, to advocate good and admonish against evil, to obey Allah, to fight sinful temptations, both cardinal and minor, and to preserve one's dignity;
- Treat loved ones and other people kindly by controlling anger, showing clemency, tolerance, humility, and open-mindedness, while maintaining a smiling face, avoiding arrogance, hypocrisy and other reprehensible character flaws;
- Set time for leisure, relaxing, enjoying lawful entertainment, socializing with friends and family, traveling and reflecting on the beauty of the earth and the magnificence of the universe.

2. Physical health

Caring for one's physical health entails:

- > Following a balanced and healthy diet with no excess in some foods at the expense of others that are beneficial and necessary for boosting vitality and preserving the body against disease;
- > Taking a keen interest in health protection, true to the motto "prevention is better than a cure" or "prevention is the best cure";
- > Regularly practicing a sport, at the very least walking. Sport builds muscle and prevents many diseases, especially in these times when people are increasingly sedentary and prone to laziness, immobility, fatigue and quick sense of tiredness;
- > Organizing resting and sleeping times by limiting them to the strictly required time as any extension of these infringes upon the time set for other required actions.

Professional responsibility

How to be professionally responsible?

The exercise of a profession is the first and foremost social responsibility. By being professionally occupied, the individual contributes to serving society and to its development, prosperity and stability. It is also the subject of monitoring by the relevant administration and the stakeholders in charge of a given sector.

Professional occupation holds a pivotal position in the individual's own action program and takes up a major share of his preoccupations. This being the case, particular attention, appreciation and esteem must be shown towards work, to be carried out with a strong sense of responsibility that transcends personal concerns and fills the person with satisfaction, contentment and a sense of fulfillment. Professional responsibility bows to two considerations:

Striving for perfection at work: Work is a heavy responsibility about which Man is accountable before society, but most importantly before Allah. If he performs it properly and in all sincerity, he will reap the fruits and rewards of his pains. But if he fails, cheats or shows laziness, he will have committed a sin that would expose him to shame in this world and to the torments of the Last Day.

He must be prepared to serve with dedication to perfection and integrity, increase productivity, steer clear of shoddiness at work, respect working hours, protect the secrets of the trade and refrain from exploiting his work in anything against the law and ethics.

Performance development: Once the individual has recognized the true value of his work and taken the measure of the responsibility he assumes, he must apply himself to improving his performance and avoiding stagnation, to acquiring experience and to using this know-how in saving time and effort and improving efficiency and effectiveness.

This may require training on the job or outside the workplace in order to improve one's skills and aim for higher qualifications.

Training responsibility

What is meant by training responsibility?

Just as Man needs to develop his theoretical knowledge, he also needs to perfect his practical skills. A balanced individual is one who can benefit from both knowledge and training.

There are two types of training, general and specialized and these can be summarized as follows:

1. General training

Of a multidisciplinary nature, this type of training goes beyond professional training to include life's various skills. The following examples represent this type:

- Mastering a living language that one uses on the job, orally and in writing, as well as to achieve intellectual, cultural, daa'wa and communicative openness onto different segments of the population;
- Training in computer and internet techniques which have become indispensable to learning about the evolution of thought and knowledge, as well as publications that neither *'ulema* nor intellectuals can progress without;
- Benefiting from training sessions in management, administration and communication techniques. This knowledge can be useful to the individual in managing his personal affairs, as well as an aid in his professional and social activities.

Specialized training

The specialization is owed to the fact that the training is closely linked to the professional or functional responsibility of the individual and requires the mobilization and development of his skills and know-how, to reach the highest potential of efficiency and performance. The following examples illustrate this:

- Training sessions on the principles of reading the Holy Quran and its phonic applications,
- Completion of training on the rules of Arabic grammar and dictation,
- Training in the art of dialogue and communication and persuasion skills to use with religious and intellectual challengers.

Identify areas where you feel the need to benefit from training.

Cultural Responsibility

What is cultural responsibility?

Cultural responsibility involves the continuous search for information and keeping abreast of local and international developments, by following the events and issues raised in intellectual, economic, social and political spheres.

This guarantees that the individual remains constantly appraised of reality and aware of new challenges, to be able to face them with the necessary determination and vigilance, and thus mitigate their negative impacts on the lives of individuals and society.

How you perceive yourself is a crucial element in your ability to assume responsibility, if you are not overly self-critical. You will not think that you'd better spare some effort to self-control. If you do not value yourself, how can you expect others to do it?

Self-Management and Empowerment, page 35

Cultural responsibility branches into two fields, namely:

1. General culture

This refers to the knowledge shared by all people, based on religious, ethnic, regional, linguistic and civilizational factors, constantly undergoing change.

Its observation requires time and effort in view of the multitude of information sources such as newspapers, radio stations, satellite channels and the internet.

2. Personal culture

This culture is acquired by focusing on what is directly linked to the individual's core activities, such as *daa'wa*, counseling, public speaking and preaching. This also includes the valuable works written on these topics, the meetings and training sessions organized for *imams* and religious counselors to address the local and global challenges they are confronted with and the intellectual and behavioral dysfunctions arising within society. These dysfunctions call for a sound and effective methodology to raise awareness about society's responsibility to counter them internally, as well as within their own hearts, families and acquaintances.

Communicational responsibility

What is meant by communicational responsibility and how to explain it?

Communication is of paramount importance in the lives of individuals and communities and is conditional upon the excellent execution of difficult activities and actions. Moreover, communication is a psychological need, and even a religious obligation. Two distinct areas of communication exist, the family and human communication.

i. Family bonding

Family bonding and interaction is a religious obligation highlighted in religious texts. The Quran says in this regard: ***[O ye who believe! save yourselves and your families from a Fire.] (At-Tahrim: 6); [And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts).] (Ar-Rum: 21); [Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good- to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess:***

For Allah loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious.] (*An-Nissaa*: 36). In the Sunnah, The Messenger (PBUH) told Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqqas, may Allah would be pleased with him: "*Anything you spend is considered an act of charity that you will be rewarded for, even if it is a mere bite of food that you put in your wife's mouth.*"⁽⁴⁵⁾

It is indeed a regrettable failing in family management if one's attention is taken away from one's wife, children, parents and relatives to focus instead on work, no matter how important it is. Good management is as explained in the following hadith that the Prophet (PBUH) addressed to one of the Companions: "*Your wife has a right over you, your host has a right over you and your body has a right over you*"⁽⁴⁶⁾. If this obligatory form of communication, which must be part of the daily, weekly and monthly program of the individual, is missing, it could place family ties at risk of dissolution and unhappiness. This in turn would impact the psychological health and soundness of the one responsible for it, leading to a drop in his performance and productivity.

Human communication

This type of communication takes shape through the ties of friendship, mutual respect, understanding and cooperation that are woven with other mosque attendees, work colleagues, people who share the same means of transportation or attend the same cultural club or public interest association. These relationships are further reinforced by gatherings at cafés or restaurants, participation in volunteering or cultural activities, sometimes through letters or phone calls, e-mails, or even visits and invitations. Yet, people often defer these contacts under the pretext of lack of time though a few minutes per week would suffice to accomplish most if not all of them to avoid the loss of their religious reward and their many other benefits, both morally and materially.

(45) ***Sahih Muslim.***

(46) ***Sahih Muslim.***

The responsibility of self-criticism

What role does self-criticism play in self-management?

Since administrative work is based on responsibility, it requires systematic accountability during all implementation stages. Without such accountability, it will be impossible to manage, organize and achieve the targets set. In public administration, for example, supervisory functions are the responsibility of the heads of departments and divisions, who in turn report to a director or direct supervisor, who reports to a more senior supervisor, and so on so forth. However, in self-management, it is up to the individual to demand accountability from himself, and that is the most difficult type of accountability.

Self-criticism keeps the sense of responsibility strong and well entrenched and prevents its lapsing, thus paving the way for growth and development. Accountability comes in many forms, including:

1. Supervision of the work by the director or his deputy to prevent any deviations or mishaps owed to specific obstacles;
2. Monitoring the progress made towards the set objectives, as well as their degree of conformity with plans;
3. Continuous monitoring of achievements and the manner of their accomplishment, as well as under achievement and the causes and obstacles underlying it. All these parameters are to be recorded in an evaluation and monitoring register that would be constantly referred to in order to make the necessary amendments, modify perspectives or streamline implementation.

Managing work

What steps are necessary to manage work?

Business management within companies or organizations requires the following administrative steps:

Planning

Planning involves the following practical measures:

- A clear and precise definition of objectives,
- Choice of implementation means and methods,

- Identification of the material and human resources necessary to achieve these objectives,
- Determination of the implementation schedule as per stages,
- Determination of progress indicators according to the pre-established stages.

Organization

Administrative measures vary according to the nature of the organizational framework. Organizational actions can be summarized in the following:

- Identification of the activity or mission to be performed;
- Designation of the persons tasked with the partial or total fulfillment of this activity, as well as the timeframe and manner of execution;
- Determination of available aids to this implementation;
- Projection of foreseeable difficulties and ways of avoiding them or mitigating their effect on proper work execution;
- Determination of measures to be taken as per the nature of work.

Orientation

Managing work within an institution, organization or association entails the presence of a director, supervisor or leader who heads a group of employees, public servants or members. Proper work entails that executives receive instructions that meet the following criteria:

- Clarify the institution's mission and vision and the objectives it seeks to fulfill through the continuous mobilization of executive resources;
- Remind all of the obligations and tasks entrusted to them, along with practical arrangements and the need for mobilization and dedication, in such a way as to appeal to the sense of responsibility of all role-players, regardless of their rank or task;
- Commend any good decisions taken to ensure progress, cautioning against obstacles that may hinder achievements and identifying ways to overcome them;

- Ensure a constant reminder of expected results and their deadlines in order to prevent laziness or negligence.

Control

This involves monitoring work with the utmost rigor and alertness to ensure that it unfolds in accordance with established plans and continues to move towards the targets set. This control is exercised through the following:

- Knowledge of the nature of work and its material and immaterial prerequisites, problems likely to hinder its progress, difficulties currently encountered, and means of timely intervention to avoid possible failures;
- Following up on executive actions under all their representations to ensure timeliness and avoid or prevent unconstructive practices while ensuring that deadlines are met;
- Alerting workers to what is expected of them, individually or collectively, without failing to commend the diligent ones and warn the careless.
- Setting up a box at the mosque for suggestions, questions, observations, etc.;
- Setting up a board to display guidelines for the mosque users, as well as announcements of conferences, debates and other information items of interest;
- The presence of a library managed by a librarian and containing, in addition to useful books, series of constructive films. At the door of this library a schedule would be displayed indicating reading hours and book borrowing rules;
- Regular meetings of the mosque's steering committee and subcommittees, and distribution of activity reports to board members;
- Publishing the names and positions of the steering committee members to facilitate communication and cooperation with them;
- Periodic organization of study and training sessions for *imams* and speakers within the country or region, with a view to sharing know-how and improving performance.

What types of administrative activities you previously chose and would like to program in the future, and which activities do you organize but are not listed above?

II- The legal aspect

- Work and law

What is meant by the term 'law'?

The term "law" appeared at first in Greece under its Greek form Kanun and was used to designate the origin of a process, the model to be followed, or the system used to organize things in such a way as to become part of an immutable regime. We speak thus of the law of gravity, the law of supply and demand, and others. On the terminological level, however, law has three meanings:

1. General terminological definition:

Law is the set of regulations governing the behavior of individuals within a society, in line with a binding order that guarantees the respect of individuals and whereby any transgression of this order is punished;

2. Terminological definition as related to a given location:

It refers to all the laws applicable in a given country. In this case, we speak of French law, Egyptian law, etc.

3. Thematic lexicographic definition:

It refers to the set of rules governing a specific area and put in place by legislators. In this case we speak of copyright law, law relating to the bar, university law ...

What is the relationship between the *Imam's* work and the country's law?

Every member of a society governed by a legal system must be familiar with the law. An individual cannot claim ignorance of the laws that regulate people's behavior in all aspects of social life and define their statuses.

The more conscious an individual is of the legal provisions in his country, whether he is involved in commercial, cultural or political activities, the more able he is to reconcile his actions with the regulations governing them. These laws guarantee support and immunity for his activities and preempt any legal

transgressions that might open him up to legal repercussions and place his activity at risk.

Which laws should *imams* and religious leaders consider with particular attention?

These are the laws pertaining to religious matters in all their activities and areas. These include, but are not limited to the following laws:

- The constitutional law which defines the State's relationship to both Islam and other religions and lists the identities and ethnic groups making up the population. This law also guarantees to religious groups the right to practice their rites, set up worship spaces, preach religious values, morals and teachings, exercise their freedom of belief and expression and such other liberties;
- Laws governing minorities in non-Muslim countries, such as immigration law, citizenship law, labor law, residence law, etc.;
- Laws governing relations between religions and ethnic groups, binding them all to specific modes of co-existence and mutual respect;
- Regulations that each group is authorized to apply in the management of their own affairs.

▪ Human rights

What is meant by human rights?

The concept of human rights has evolved down the ages, prompted by the need to organize relations between people, between the governors and the governed, and with other nations on the bases of the rights, justice, freedom and dignity of the human being, as well as the individual and collective right to self-determination.

Human rights were inspired from divine religions, human civilizations and social and political revolutions, to ultimately take shape in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

There is no doubt that the human mind, with all its aspirations and limitations, played an undeniable role in conceptualizing the human rights currently in

force internationally. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between rights intrinsic to Man's nature, as advocated by Islam and set in its Charia and which we must preserve, and those that deviated from these provisions and were perverted by human whims and for which no corroboration can be found in the Quran, the Sunnah or ethical codes.

What is the sound approach to a dialogue on human rights?

- Emphasize the rights endorsed by the spirit and purposes of Islam, such as Man's freedom and dignity, his responsibility towards himself and personal affairs, his treatment in a fair and equitable manner, his equality in terms of rights and obligations... It is also necessary to present Islam's perspective on other rights which are partially acceptable, without omitting to highlight those of their aspects that contradict Islamic law, adopting a firm and unambiguous attitude on this issue;
- Link the protection of human rights in Islam to the preservation of Allah's rights, considering that any violation of these rights is a violation of a divine right, on the premise that Allah committed people to respect other human beings' rights and threatened with punishment those who violate these rights and commit an injustice, prejudice or aggression towards another individual;
- Link human rights to one's own obligations in order to clearly show the relationship between the protection of rights and the fulfillment of obligations. Any duty undertaken by an individual is an acquired right for another individual who, in exchange for the enjoyment of this right, performs a duty in favor of the other. These duties thus become rights due to both of them.
- The correlation existing between rights and obligations implies that he who does not fulfill his duties does not deserve the opportunity to enjoy rights;

According to the Human Rights Reference Guide, freedom of expression is empowering every citizen to express his opinion through all means available, whether written or audiovisual, and other advanced means such as books, magazines, newspapers, radio and television, as well as different forms of creativity such as drawing, novels, poetry and theater ...

- Warn against exaggerated claims for rights whilst neglecting obligations, a phenomenon that has become rather common among Muslims in most countries; advocate the opposite of this phenomenon by praising those who perform their duties with diligence and pleasure and claim less rights, as the Messenger (PBUH) recommended when he said: *“You will see after me selfishness (on the part of other people) and other matters that you will disapprove of.”* They asked, *“What do you order us to do, O Allah’s Messenger (under such circumstances)?”* He (PBUH) said, *“Pay their rights to them (to the rulers), and ask your right from Allah.”*⁽⁴⁷⁾

MATRIX OF MOST IMPORTANT RIGHTS	Political Rights	Social Rights
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Right to political affiliation ▪ Right to political participation ▪ Freedom of expression ▪ Freedom of belief ▪ Rights of peoples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Right to housing ▪ Right to healthcare ▪ Right to social security
	Civil Rights	Cultural Rights
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family rights ▪ Inviolability of the home ▪ Privacy of correspondence and conversations ▪ Right to information ▪ Right to safety and security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Right to education ▪ Right to cultural identity ▪ Right to cultural participation ▪ Copyright ▪ Right to difference
	Economic Rights	Constantly evolving Rights
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Right to property ▪ Right to employment ▪ Right to striking and other labor-related rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rights of women ▪ Rights of children ▪ Rights of persons with disabilities

(47) Narrated by the two sheikhs.

III - The cultural aspect

1. The office of the *Imam*

Which cultural issues are more closely related to the office of the *imam*?

There are myriad cultural aspects attached to the exercise of the *Imam*'s function, especially since his success in his mission and the effective accomplishment of his responsibilities is contingent upon these issues. These are summarized in the following areas:

- *Fiqh al-Ibadat* (jurisprudence of worship) - ablutions - *tayammum* (dry ablutions) - the five obligatory prayers, the Friday prayer and the supererogatory prayers (voluntary and associated with prayers, *Eid* prayers, the washing of the dead, shrouding of the dead and mortuary prayer - rain prayers...). Other forms of worship include fasting, *zakat*, pilgrimage, giving due attention to the morality and purposes behind them;
- The Holy Quran, through memorization, reflection and recitation, according to the adopted readings, Warsh and Hafs among others;
- Arabic language (grammar, dictation, linguistic styles, lexicography), attention to the Arabic equivalents of terms borrowed from Latin in everyday language, and greater interest in reading Arabic literature, whether in poetry, prose or novel form;
- Knowledge of the official language of the host country, both written and spoken, as it is the language of communication and transmission of teachings and clarification of religion;
- Acquisition and studying of works aimed at improving the methods of presenting *khutbas* and sermons, as well as mass communication techniques.

2. The religious culture

What religious culture is indispensable for the *Imam*?

The more an *Imam* is steeped in religious culture and knowledge, the better he can accomplish his mission. However, the minimum religious knowledge he cannot operate without can be summarized in the following:

- *Al-Aqeeda al-Islamiya* (the Islamic creed)
- *Usul al-Fiqh* (the foundations of Muslim law)
- Exegesis and sciences of the Quran
- Exegesis and Hadith Science
- *Fiqh al-Ibadat* (the *fiqh* of religious rites)
- *Fiqh al-Mu'amalat* (rules governing relationships)
- The *Sira* (biography) of the Prophet (PBUH) and great Islamic figures
- *Tazkiya* (recommendation) and morals
- The books of *fatwas*.

3. The intellectual culture

To what extent does the *Imam* need an intellectual culture and in what fields?

- Islamic thought and its main schools: Sunnism, Achariyya, Mutazila, Shiism, Kharijiyya, Qadariya, Dhahiriya, Salafism, Sufism, Qadianiyya and Bahatism;
- Modern doctrines: Secularism, Liberalism, Democracy, Communism, Nationalism, Zionism, Evangelism, Globalization, Capitalism, Freemasonry, Materialism and Historicism;
- Human sciences: The *Imam* needs to be familiar with trends in modern philosophy, education and psychology, history and social sciences, and to also be familiar with the country's civil law, politics and economics.

Information science can be a powerful aid to the *Imam* thanks to the progress made in this field. It would enable him to fulfill his cultural and educational missions. But what possibilities does it offer?

It goes without saying that each era has its own challenges and problems which can only be dealt with by the means adapted to that era. Anyone unable to make use of these means in fulfilling his personal and social activities may miss the opportunity to integrate his times and may have great difficulty in achieving his goals.

Access to information sources and reference works was at a certain time difficult and time, effort and money consuming. But today, thanks to the tremendous internet progress, it is easy for anyone to tap into the enormous potential of this network in a few seconds. Some of the potentialities of the internet are:

- It enables persons with modest computer and internet knowledge to train themselves in these two fields using training programs that help develop their IT skills and tap into the immense available possibilities, such as:
 - Introduction to computer components, functions and programs, as well as forms, printing and file management.
 - Learn how to use digital audio, video and writing recording devices and how to burn content on CDs, project on large screens and other operations.
 - Facilitate search on any subject or field by using search engines such as the most famous www.google.com, to access the following aid tools:
 - o Peruse writings and opinions about selected topics.
 - o Provide a large number of reference works that guide and enrich the research.
 - o Help in translating terminology, exploring dictionaries and the automatic correction of spelling mistakes.
 - o Facilitate communication between researchers and readers either in writing or through audio-visual channels.
 - o Draft articles, *khutbas*, sermons and research with lesseffort, in shorter times and often at a marginal cost.
 - o Store information and research, compiling them in folders that are often updated and developed.
 - o Open up access to numerous sources and reference works in different knowledge areas, though particular attention must be paid to typing mistakes, omissions and other dysfunctions that may affect them. Such irregularities require attention and alertness on the part of the reader. Some of the resources available in this regard are:

- The electronic websites of many libraries accessible through the internet to benefit from their rich and diverse contents such as <http://www.waqfeya.net/shamela>, al-Shamela and al-Qirtass libraries and their counterparts in English, French, Spanish and other languages.
- Perusing the many issues of magazines, periodicals, newspapers and proceedings of different forums and academic gatherings.
- Acquiring knowledge about intellectual, doctrinal, sectarian and social movements and their trends and works.

The effective use of search engines helps achieve the desired goal, especially since many sites are specialized in speeches, sermons, lessons, poetry, maxims, tales and proverbs. Some of these sites are:

Websites for <i>khutbas</i>, sermons and lectures	Websites of Islamic stories	Islamic poetry websites
www.islamway.com www.islamweb.net www.alminbar.net www.khotab.net www.saaid.net www.shbab-aleslam.com www.sunna.info	www.gesah.net www.alshamsi.netwww. ahmedalbkrealansare.jeeran.com www.vb.islam2all.com	www.islamway.com www.adab.com www.poetsgate.com

The following table proposes a list of digital works that can provide the *Imam* with inspiration in drafting his speeches and sermons:

Digital books on purification (*Tazkiya*) and style softeners

Works from the website: www.alwaraq.net		
<i>Rawdat al-Uqalaa wa Nuzhat al-Fudalaa</i> Ibn Habbane al-Basti	<i>Uddat al-Sabirine wa Dhakhirat al-Shakirine</i> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya	<i>Majma' al-Amthal</i> Al-Midani
<i>Ihyaa 'Ulum ad-Din</i> Abu Hamed al-Ghazali	<i>Tahdhib al-Akhlaq</i> Ibn Miskawayh	<i>Sayd al-Khater</i> Ibn al-Jawzi
<i>Tafseel al-Nashatayn wa Tahseel al-Sa'adatayn</i> Al-Raghib al-Ispahani	<i>Qut al-Qulub</i> Abu Taleb al-Makki	<i>Bahjat al-Majalis wa Uns al-Majalis</i> Ibn Abd al-Barr
<i>Al-Isti'dad lil Mawt wa Suaal al-Qabr</i> Al-Malibari	<i>Hilyat al-Awliyaa</i> Abu Nu'aym al-Ispahani	<i>Nuzhat al-Majalis wa Muntakhab al-Nafaiis</i> Al-Safouri
<i>Asbab al-Maghfira</i> Ibn Rajab	<i>Al-Akhlaq wa al-Siyar</i> Ibn Hazm	<i>Jamaa al-Jawahir fil Khutab al-Minbariyya</i> Abdurrahman al-Saadi
Works from the website: www.alwaraq.net		
<i>Ghidhaa al-Albab fi Sharh Mandoumat al-Adab</i> Muhamad al-Mirdaw	<i>Adab al-Dunya wa ad-Din</i> Al-Mawardi	<i>Al-Fawakih al-Shahiyya fi al-Khutab al-Minbariyya</i> Abdel Rahman as-Saadi

Conclusion

In conclusion, the content and features of this Guidebook can be summarized under two main headings:

The cultural aspect

This aspect addressed the culture of dialogue and communication and the culture of the middle stance and moderation to achieve the following goals:

First: The culture of dialogue and communication

Dialogue and communication have become a global culture advocated in numerous contemporary writings. National and international organizations have been created to alleviate the crises and conflicts that erupted in many parts of the world, and to promote communication, understanding and cooperation among different cultures, civilizations and religions.

In light of these universal trends, *imams* and religious counselors are called upon to assist in the implementation of our religion's teachings and its guiding principles. Such teachings advocate dialogue and rapprochement between peoples, based on the respect of people's individual and collective choices. It is indeed impossible to standardize convictions, ideas and orientations, even within the same religion or culture.

This Guidebook adopted the principle of dialogue, not only because it is enshrined in the true culture of Islamic, but also for being the ideal approach to teaching, guidance, preaching and reforming. In this perspective, the Guidebook presents dialogue's key rules and techniques, as well as the methods of elaborating lectures and sermons on the bases of meaningful dialogue and far-reaching communication.

Second: The culture of the middle stance and moderation

The middle stance and moderation are most salient features in Islam and its culture. The current challenges faced by the Islamic Ummah urge us to call upon these notions with greater resolve. Muslim youth, for example, have begun to veer towards intellectual and behavioral stances that denote radicalism and violence, tending to obscure the middle-stance advocated by

Islam and its moderation. They are all the more important today in light of the external media campaigns that seek to tarnish the true image of Islam and its tolerance, exploiting isolated cases to label Islam and Muslims as terrorist and extremist, and portraying them as a ghoul that the rest of the world must spurn as opposed to embracing.

The Guidebook strived to weed out superficial and unproductive talk in this respect by proposing practical approaches to applying the middle ground approach to different intellectual and behavioral aspects, adopting it as a general policy throughout the *daa'wa* discourse.

The capacity-building aspect

The Guidebook provides the *Imam* and religious counselor with the key elements needed with regard to abilities and skills. It recalls the importance of building capacities and honing skills on the cultural side, before addressing with more depth aspects related to the *khutba* or the sermon in their preparation and delivery phases. Then the Guidebook went on to list the functional aspects related to the administrative and legal culture. These elements can be summarized as follows:

First: The *khutba* and the sermon

Attention was paid to providing many practical ideas that draw on previous writings about renewing the discourse of the *khutba* and the sermon, integrating a number of innovations in terms of practicalities, and engaging the reader to reflect and make proposals through many stations that invite him to interact and participate. A model *khutba*/sermon was provided to bring the *Imam* closer to the desired model that can inspire and benefit him at the practical level. It promoted more adaptation and adjustment to the specific and objective circumstances of each and every one.

Second: The administrative and legal culture

An effort was made to familiarize the *Imam* or religious counselor with the fundamentals of this culture which usually receives little attention despite being essential to the efficient and cost-effective implementation of any action.

The Guidebook underscored the importance of information and communication technologies that allow their users to save not only energy, time and money, but to also boost their creative faculties. Reference was made in this section to electronic sites that *imams* and religious counselors can refer to during the elaboration of a *khutba* or sermon. It is hoped that this will prompt a keener interest in computers and the internet to develop the *Imams'* religious and intellectual culture and build their *daa'wa* and religious counseling skills.

The present Guidebook is not intended to be a simple reading exercise. It aspires instead to become an auto-didactic tool that can be used as work program and reference material for all those who feel the need to tap into its guidelines and take inspiration from its innovative dimensions.

May Allah help us in our endeavors and lead us onto the right path.

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