



**THE FARE WELL SERMON OF THE
HOLY PROPHET MUHAMMAD (S.A.W.S)**

UNIT: 25

**THE FAREWELL SERMON
OF THE
HOLY PROPHET MUHAMMAD**
(Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)

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ISLAMIC CORRESPONDENCE COURSE
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FOREWORD

Muslim communities all over the world are faced with a variety of challenges in their Dawah activities. One major challenge relates with the area of education. It is not easy to develop, in every community, an educational institution which may provide professional assistance and back up to members of community in acquiring Islamic knowledge and information. In some Muslim communities full time educational institutions have been established. In others, educational needs of the community are met through weekend programmes, seminars, symposia and other such activities.

Some Muslim communities have given serious thought to programmes of distance teaching, however, such programmes have not been materialized with proper know-how and professional assistance.

The Dawah Academy, at a humble level, is in the process of developing a series of correspondence courses in English and other languages. In order to develop a suitable introductory course on Islam as the way of life, we are introducing, at this point, material selected from existing Islamic literature.

Our next step will be to produce our own material in view of the needs of Muslim communities in various parts of the world. This will have two levels: first general level and second a post-graduate course on Islam. The present selection from Islamic literature deals with first level. This covers a variety of topics dealing with Islam as a complete way of life. We hope this course will provide initial information on important aspects of Islam.

We will greatly appreciate critical comments and observations of participants on this course. This will help us in development of our own material for both levels of study. Please do not hesitate to write to us if you have some suggestions to improve the material or methodology. Address all your observations at the following:

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**THE FAREWELL SERMON
OF THE HOLY PROPHET
MUHAMMAD**
(Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)

(The sermon of the Holy Prophet is not only remarkable for its eloquence, but it contains a sublime message for the whole of the human race. The world has not been able to lay down better principles of ethics and morality than those enunciated in it. Every word of it breathes a spirit of magnanimity and aims at establishing righteousness and fair dealing among humanity on a workable basis. It establishes brotherhood among Muslims — and all humankind — irrespective of the divergences of their geographical, racial and colour backgrounds, and provides an outline of a social order, perfectly free from oppression and injustice —guaranteeing the Basic *Human Rights and Needs* essential for a truly free, fraternal, moral, and peacefully progressive society.)

“All praise is due to Allah, so we praise Him, and seek His pardon and we turn to him. We seek refuge with Allah from the evils of ourselves and from the evil consequences of our deeds. Whom Allah guides aright, there is none to lead him astray; and there is none to guide him aright, whom Allah leads astray. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, the One, having no partner with Him. His is the sovereignty and to Him is due all praise. He grants life and causes death and is Powerful over everything. There is no god but Allah, the One; He fulfilled His promise and granted victory to His bondsman, and He, alone, routed the confederates (of the enemies of Islam).

“O people, listen to my words, for I do not know whether we shall ever meet again and perform Hajj after this year. O ye people, Allah says:

O people! We created you from one male and one female and made you into tribes and nations, so as to be known to one another. Verily in the sight of Allah, the most honoured amongst you is the one who is most God-fearing. There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab and for a non-Arab over an Arab, nor for the white over the black nor for the black over the white, except in God-consciousness.

"All mankind is the progeny of Adam, and Adam was fashioned out of clay. Behold! Every claim of privilege, whether that of blood or property, is under my heels, except that of the custody of the Ka'ba, and supplying of water to the pilgrims.

"O people of Quraish, don't appear (on the Day of Judgement) with the burden of this world around your necks, whereas other people may appear (before the Lord) with the rewards of the Hereafter. In that case I shall avail you naught against Allah.

"Behold! All practices of the days of ignorance are now under my feet. The blood revenges of the days of ignorance are remitted. The first claim on blood I abolish is that of Ibn Rabi'ah b. Harith who was nursed in the tribe of Sa'ad and whom the Hudayls killed. All interest and usurious dues accruing from the time of ignorance stand wiped out. And the first amount of interest that I remit is that which Abbas b. Abd-al-Muttalib had to receive. Verily it is remitted entirely.

"O people, verily your blood, your property and your honour are sacred and inviolable until you appear before your Lord, as the sacred inviolability of this day of yours, this month of yours and this very town (of yours). Verily, you will soon meet your Lord and you will be held answerable for your actions.

"O people, verily you have got certain right over your women and your women have certain rights over you. It is right upon them to honour

their conjugal rights, and not to commit acts of impropriety, which, if they do, you are authorised by Allah to separate them from your beds and chastise them, but not severely, and if they refrain, then clothe and feed them properly.

"Behold! It is not permissible for a woman to give anything from the wealth of her husband to anyone but with his consent.

"Treat the women kindly, since they are your helpers and are not in a position to manage their affairs themselves. Fear Allah concerning women, for verily you have taken them on the security of Allah and have made their persons lawful unto you by words of Allah.

"O people, Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, has ordained to every one his due share (of inheritance). Hence there is no need (of special) testament for an heir (departing from the rules laid down by the Shari'ah).

"The child belongs to the marriage-bed and the violator of wedlock shall be stoned. And reckoning of their (deeds) rests with Allah.

"He who attributes his ancestry to other than his father or claims his clientship to other than his master, the curse of Allah is upon him.

"All debts must be repaid, all borrowed property must be returned, gifts should be reciprocated and a surety must make good the loss to the assured.

"Beware, no one committing a crime is responsible for it but himself. Neither the child is responsible for the crime of his father, nor the father is responsible for the crime of his child.

"Nothing of his brother is lawful for a Muslim except what he himself gives willingly. So do not wrong yourselves.

“O people, every Muslim is the brother of the other Muslim, and all the Muslims form one brotherhood. And your slaves! See that you feed them with such food as you eat yourselves, and clothe them with the same clothes that you, yourselves wear.

“Take heed not to go astray after me, and strike one another’s necks. He who (amongst you) has any trust with him, he must return it to its owner.

“O people! Listen and obey, though a mangled Abyssinian slaves is appointed as your Amir, provided he executes (the Ordinance of) the Book of Allah among you.

“O people! No prophet would be raised after me and no new Ummah (would be formed) after you.

“Verily I have left amongst you that which will never lead you astray, the Book of Allah, which, if you hold fast, you shall never go astray.

“And beware of transgressing the limits set in the matters of religion, for it is transgression of (the proper bounds of) religion, that brought destruction to (many people) before you.

“Verily, the Satan is disappointed at never being worshipped in this land of yours, but if obedience in anything (short of worship is expected, that is) : he will be pleased in matters you may be disposed to think insignificant, so beware of him in your matters of religion.

“Behold! Worship your Lord; offer prayers five times a day; observe fast in the month of Ramadan; pay readily the Zakat (poor-due) on your property; and perform pilgrimage to the House of God and obey your rulers, and you will be admitted to the Paradise of your Lord.

“Let him that is present, convey it unto him who is absent. For many people to whom the message is conveyed, may be more mindful of it than the audience.

“And if you were asked about me, what would you say?

“They answered: We bear witness that you have conveyed the trust (of religion) and discharged your ministry of Apostleship and looked to our welfare.”

Thereupon Allah’s Messenger (may peace be upon him) lifted his fore-finger towards the sky and then pointing towards the people said:

“O Lord: Bear Thou witness unto it!

“O Lord: Bear Thou witness unto it!”

1. Prologue

In his last pilgrimage, the Prophet, at the age of sixty-three mounted on his she-camel, addressed a gathering of almost a hundred thousand Muslims. That address became a landmark in Muslim history, and a vital document of Islam. It has become famous as *Khutbah Hajjat al-Wadā‘*, that is, the ‘Farewell Address’. The speech itself is a masterpiece of the Prophet’s renowned eloquence, a most noble proclamation and a document of unusual significance. For this reason, it is sometimes referred to a *Khutbah at-Tablīgh* (i.e. the Proclamation Address) and, in recognition of the perennial and fundamental themes incorporated into it, as the *Khutbah al-Islām*. The first two epithets are used of it by Ibn Hishām himself.

Its text, as given by Ibn Hishām, is terse and short, consisting of the Prophet’s address on Mount Rahmah at Arafāt on the 9th of Dhu al-Hijjah of the year 10 A.H.

Ibn Kathīr gives a much longer text, consisting not only of the address at ‘Arafāt, but also the Prophet’s second address delivered on the second day of his stay at Minā, i.e. on the 11th of Dhu al-Hijjah. Ibn Kathīr’s account is therefore much more comprehensive than that of Ibn Hishām. Some of the further proclamations included in it could not properly be included in Ibn Hishām’s version, since these were made separately in the three days following the ‘Arafāt address of the 9th of Dhu al-Hijjah. However, some later authorities have edited the Farewell Address, so that it includes these further statements and proclamations.

We shall first give Ibn Hishām text, which is also given by Ibn Kathīr. Then we shall give the additions made by Ibn Kathīr and others.

Said Ibn Hishām¹

The Prophet started by praising God and thanking Him, then turning to his audience, he added:

‘O people! Listen well to my words, for I do not know if I am ever going to meet you again on such an occasion after this year.

O people! Your lives and your property shall be inviolable until you meet your Lord, just as this day and this month are inviolable.

You are surely going to meet your Lord, and He will question you about your deeds. Thus I have conveyed to you:

Whoever of you is keeping a trust of someone else, shall return it to him.

¹*Ibn Hishām: Part II, p. 604.*

All usury (Ribā) shall henceforth be abolished. But you may keep your capital. You shall not inflict nor suffer injustice. God has ordained that any usury (Ribā) due to al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib shall be henceforth abolished. Every right to avenge homicide in pre-Islamic days is henceforth abolished. And the first such right which I abolish is that arising from the slaying of Rabī'ah ibn al-Hārith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib.

O people! Satan has given up every hope of ever being worshipped in this land of yours. But he will be pleased if obeyed in the lesser of your deeds. So, beware of him, concerning you religion.

O people, intercalation is indeed evidence of great unbelief and confirms unbelievers in their misguidance. They render it lawful one year, and they forbid in the next, so that they appear in conformity with the number of months which God declared inviolable. (But in reality) they resort to this in order to make legitimate that which God forbade and to forbid that which God has made permissible.

But surely time has revolved in its own fashion since the day God created the heavens and the earth. The number of months with God is twelve, of which four are inviolate. Three of these are consecutive and Rajab of Mudar which is between Jumādā and Sha'bān.

O people! surely you have certain rights over your wives and they have certain rights over you. It is of your rights on them that they do not invite anyone to your house whom you do not approve and also never commit any acts of lewdness or manifest impropriety. Should they commit any of those acts, God has permitted you to abstain from having sexual intimacy with them and to chastise them, yet not severely. But if they refrain (from these malpractices), then they are entitled to their rights of being fed and clothed in a kind of fitting way. Do treat your wives well, be kind to them, for they are confined to your homes and are dependent upon you, not being able to do anything for themselves. You have taken

them as wives by the trust of God, and enjoyed their bodies by the permission of God. Think well, O people and understand what I am saying to you for I have now assuredly conveyed to you (what I am supposed to convey).

I am leaving with you what if you hold fast to, you will never go astray. The Book of God and the Sunnah of His Prophet.

O people, think well about my words, and understand them well. You no doubt know that every Muslim is a brother unto every other Muslim and that Muslims are indeed one brotherhood. Nothing is lawful for him, of his brother save that he himself gives willingly. Do not, therefore, do injustice to yourselves. O Lord, have I conveyed Your message?"

It is reported that people responded: 'O yes' to the Prophet's last question. He concluded by saying; 'O Lord, bear witness.'

The foregoing is the standard version of Ibn Hishām's account of the Farewell Address. However, he gives a second version which is substantially the same except that it adds that the Prophet elicited responses and affirmations from his audience concerning the sanctity of the inviolate months of the *Hajj*.

Ibn Kathīr's¹ version is much more comprehensive, adding to Ibn Hishām's text a number of very important points, apparently made by the Prophet on different occasions during his last pilgrimage.

2. Ibn Kathīr's Account of the Farewell Address

Whereas Ibn Hishām bases his version of the Farewell Address upon the address which the Prophet gave on Mount 'Arafāt, Ibn Kathīr

¹Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyayah wa al-Nihāyah*.

includes in his rather lengthy statement of that address a number of other speeches as well. He draws mainly on the books of the Sayings of the Prophet, in particular Bukhārī and Muslim. According to al-Bukhārī, the Prophet made a second speech on the day of slaughter (*Yawm an-Nahr*). In that second speech, he repeated his declaration of the inviolateness of human life and the sanctity of private property, which he had made the day before. But in this second speech, he referred also to the inviolateness of human sexual integrity and honour:

1. Said al-Bukhārī, on the authority of ‘Ali ibn ‘Abd Allāh, on that of Yahyā ibn Sa‘īd, on that of Fudail ibn Ghazwān, on that of ‘Ikrimah (Ibn Abī Jahl) on the authority of ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās, that the Prophet addressed the Muslims on the slaughter day. He said:

‘O people! What day is this?’

They said: ‘A sacred day.’

He said: ‘Which place is this?’

They said: ‘It is a sacred place.’

He said: ‘What month is this?’

They said: ‘It is a sacred month.’

Said the Prophet: ‘Surely your lives, your property and your honour are as inviolate unto you as the inviolability of this day, this month and this place.’

Bukhārī said that the Prophet repeated the foregoing statement a number of times. Then he raised his head and added:

‘O Lord, have I conveyed Your message?’

Then the Prophet added, according to a second version of the above *hadīth*, also narrated by al-Bukhārī: ‘Those present shall convey this to those who are absent. Perchance, those to whom this is reported be more diligent and more thoughtful. Do not revert after me, becoming as unbelievers, engaged in smiting each other’s necks.’

2. Another significant addition in Ibn Kathīr is based on a saying of the Prophet's, narrated by Imām Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Imām an-Nasā'ī. Both Ahmad and al-Nasā'ī rest this new addition on the authority of Hilāl Ibn Yasāf:

The Prophet said, in his Farewell Address: 'There are four commandments:

- You shall not associate partners with God.
- You shall not kill the souls which God has rendered inviolate, except in dispensation of justice.
- You shall not fornicate.
- You shall not steal.'

3. A third addition in Ibn Kathīr is based on the authority of Usāmah ibn Sharīk. Usāmah said that he witnessed the Prophet giving a speech on his Farewell Pilgrimage. Said the Prophet:

'Take care to be kind to your mothers and fathers, your sisters and brothers, then those of your nearest of kin.'

4. A fourth addition in Ibn Kathīr consists of four points of advice: The Prophet said to his audience:

'Worship your Lord alone.

Pray your five ordained prayers.

Fast your month of Ramadān.

Obeys if you were commanded to do so by those in authority amongst you.

If you do these things, then you shall enter the Paradise of your Lord.'

This fourth addition is narrated by Imām Ahmad ibn Hanbal, on the authority of Abū 'Umāmah.

5. A substantial addition in Ibn Kathīr refers to the important topic of inherited rights. This is also narrated by Imām Ahmad, on the authority of the same Abū 'Umāmah. Said the Prophet: 'God has ordained that everyone should receive what is due to him by way of inheritance. No bequest shall be made to a prospective inheritor. A child belongs to the marriage bed and the violator of wedlock shall be stoned. Their ultimate reckoning shall be with God. Whosoever attributes his ancestry to other than his father, or claims his clientship to other than his actual protector, shall incur the curse of God until Doomsday. No woman shall spend from what is in her house, except by the permission of her husband.'

The Companions said: 'O Messenger of God! Not even food?'

He said: 'Food is the best of our wealth.'

The Prophet then added: 'Whatever is borrowed must be returned, grants and gifts should be mutual, and debts should be repaid and leaders are more likely to incur debts and losses.'

The foregoing statement is attributed to the Prophet by the four authorities on the *Sunnah*, namely Imām Ahmad, Abū Dāwūd, an-Nasā'ī and al-Tirmidhī.

6. Muslim narrated on the authority of Umm al-Husain, who said: 'I accompanied the Prophet on his Farewell Pilgrimage. I heard him saying: "O people, listen and obey, even if an Abyssinian slave is in command over you, so long as he leads you according to the Book of God".'

7. The last of the significant additions by Ibn Kathīr is one that pertains to the pre-Islamic *Jāhiliyyah* period: The Prophet meant to impress upon his audience that Islam represents a final break with the

habits and customs of that *Jāhiliyyah*: 'All customs and practices of *Jāhiliyyah* are under my feet, and so are all blood revenges and money rights arising therefrom until Doomsday....'

Some authorities include in the Farewell Address the following theme relating to personal responsibility and the equality of all people in the sight of God:

'O people! Surely, your Lord is One, and your father is one. You all belong to Adam, and Adam was created of clay. No Arab is superior to a non-Arab, or vice versa. No white man is superior to a black man and vice versa. Surely, the noblest amongst you are the most God-fearing amongst you'.¹

4. The *Lā-haraj* Maxim

Ibn Kathīr's account is notable for the *Lā-haraj* (no hindrance) pronouncement which the Prophet made on a number of issues. These pronouncements were given as responses to those of his Companions asking whether it was permissible to do things which appeared doubtful to them. On his Farewell Pilgrimage the Prophet almost always gave positive answers to those questions. he would typically answer: 'O yes, you could do such and such, with no hindrance (*Lā-haraj*) to you.' Or he would simply say: '*Lā-haraj* (all right)'.

Ibn Kathīr relies here on the authority of the two shaikhs, Bukhārī and Muslim. Both Bukhārī and Muslim reported, on the authority of Ibn Jurayh on the authority of az-Zuhrī, on the authority of 'Īsā ibn Talhah, on the authority of 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Ās, that whilst the Prophet, *sallā Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, was addressing the pilgrims on the day of slaughter, a man stood up and asked 'I thought that doing so-and-so comes before doing so-and-so.' Another man, then, also stood up

¹*al-Hujurāt* 49:13.

and asked a similar question. To both men the Prophet replied: 'Do it —no embarrassment.— *lā-haraj*.' Imām Muslim added: 'The Prophet was not asked about any matter, being done before or after its ordained time, to which he did not give the answer: "All right, no embarrassment. You can do it in that way, nothing is incumbent upon you"'

The *lā-haraj* pronouncement encourages a measured degree of flexibility in matters of religious rites and ordinances, and a major shift away from dogmatism in religious worship. This is not surprising in a religion like Islam, which so emphasizes inner modes and attitudes of the mind and spirit. Ostentatious acts or gestures are not the hallmarks of piety or sincerity in religion. The worth of acts and deeds depends very much upon the goodness of the intentions and motives behind them. The *lā-haraj* maxim also represents a shift towards easiness and naturalness in religious devotions. For one to be a strict religious devotee, one does not need, and certainly is not required, to always take the hard way. It is well-known that this was in fact the prophet's own way. Whenever he had to choose between two alternatives, he would always opt for the easier one, so long as that did not lead to disobeying any of God's commandments. The Prophet repeatedly said: 'This religion of Islam is a lenient one. So go into it with ease and patience. No-one who attempts to storm his way into it, will come out victorious.'¹

However, the *lā-haraj* maxim should not be interpreted as an unconditional licence to dodge all religious obligations. There can be no doubt that it does not relate to well-defined, established and central religious observances. Thus lesser rites, not affecting the stated wisdom behind them, are the natural and proper sphere for the application of the *lā-haraj* maxim.

¹Bukhārī, '*Kitāb al-Īmān*', Vol. I, p. 16.

It is indeed interesting that the maxim was declared in connection with performance of the *Hajj* which is perhaps the Islamic observance with the most complicated set of rites and rituals. Symbolism in those rites and rituals is most conspicuous. It is perhaps in view of the complexity and multiplicity of those rites, and to the difficulty and the length of the *Hajj* itself, that the *lā-haraj* maxim is primarily directed and to which it is especially suited. Its import is nonetheless general, whenever situations are parallel to those prevalent in the *Hajj*. The maxim epitomizes a whole set of attitudes and dispositions towards religion in general. If the reservations we have made are borne in mind, the maxim is an excellent prescription against narrow-mindedness and bigotry in religion, so characteristic of some religious communities in the past as well as in the present.

4. Mixed Feelings of Joy and Sadness

The Farewell Address was heard with intent and solemnity. The Prophet's manner of delivering it, the gravity and profundity of his voice, his repetition of the main propositions, all helped to impress upon his audience that it was indeed no ordinary speech. The outstanding eloquence of the address, the noble and sublime message it contained, raised the minds and feelings of his audience to an extraordinary mood of thoughtfulness and expectation.

It was during this Farewell Pilgrimage that God revealed to the Muslims that their religion had been completed and perfected. The Prophet declaimed loudly the momentous revelation:

'Today I have perfected for you your religion, and I have completed My favour upon you, and I have approved of Islam as your religion'.¹

¹*al-Mā'idah* 5:3.

The Muslim multitude rejoiced. Yet this joy was checked by an underlying feeling of unease and anxiety. What next? What was to become of the Prophet, who had already hinted that he might never be at that occasion again?

Ibn Kathīr, on the authority of Bukharī and Muslim claims that the above verse (5:3) signifying the perfection of Islam, was revealed on the day of ‘Arafah, just before the Prophet delivered his farewell address. On hearing it, ‘Umar sobbed passionately and then burst into tears. He understood the sad news implicit in it. People crowded around him, asking in surprise: ‘What is the matter? O ‘Umar.’ He replied: ‘After perfection, there is nothing but bereavement.’

He knew and feared the terrible loss impending after the revelation of this verse—that the Prophet’s role in this earthly life was nearing its end.

‘Umar’s cryptic response was not grasped by all those present. Two other persons, however, got the sad message as quickly as he did: Abū Bakr as-Siddīq and the young ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās, the Prophet’s cousin, known for his ready wits and genius.

Another verse which also conveyed this message about the impending departure of the Prophet from this life is *sūrah an-Nasr*: ‘When God’s victory and succour comes, and you (o Muhammad) witness people entering the religion of God in great numbers, then recite the praises of your Lord, and ask His forgiveness, He is oft-forgiving’ (Qur’ān, 110)

Ibn Kathīr asserts that this verse was revealed on the second day of the Prophet’s stay in Makkah. When *Sūrah an-Nasr* was revealed, the Prophet knew that the end of his days in this life was approaching. ‘Umar also grasped the sad import of the verse, as did ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās. Apparently the generality of Muslims did not. When some elder Muslims

who participated in Badr, resented the prominence which the young ‘Abdullāh enjoyed with ‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb, he called upon him to interpret *Sūrah an-Nasr* to them. ‘Umar asked the older Muslims what this *sūrah* meant and they did not know. Then the youthful Ibn ‘Abbās explained it to them, revealing its hidden meaning. ‘Umar concurred with Ibn ‘Abbās’ explanation.

5. The Augmented Text of Ibn Kathīr’s Additions

If we regard Ibn Hishām’s text of the Farewell Address as the first part of a larger text of it, Ibn Kathīr’s additions will then be the second part. Since those additions were given in the form of scattered places throughout Ibn Kathīr’s discussion of the topic, they need to be rearranged together as the second part of an enlarged, edited text of the Farewell Address. The Prophet said:

‘Surely, your lives, your property and your honour are inviolate unto you, just as this day, month, and this place. O Lord! have I conveyed Your message? Those present shall convey this to those absent. Perchance those to whom this is reported will be more diligent and mindful than those hearing it.

Do not revert, after I am gone, into unbelief, smiting each other’s necks.

You shall not associate partners with God. You shall not kill the souls which God has rendered inviolate except in dispensations of justice.

You shall not fornicate.

You shall not steal

Take special care to be kind to your mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, then those nearest of kin.

*Worship your lord alone.
Pray your five ordained prayers.
Fast during the month of Ramadān.*

Obey, if you are commanded to do so by those in authority amongst you.

If you do these things, then you shall enter the Paradise of your Lord. God has ordained that everyone should receive what is due to him by way of inheritance. No bequest shall be made to a prospective inheritor. A child belongs to the marriage-bed and the violator of wedlock shall be stoned. Their ultimate reckoning shall be with God. Whosoever attributes his ancestry to other than his father, or claims his clientship to other than his actual protectors, shall incur the curse of God until Doomsday.

No woman shall spend from what is in her house except by the permission of her husband.'

The Companions said: 'O Messenger of God, not even food?' 'Food is the best of our wealth', the Prophet replied. The Prophet then added: 'Whatever is borrowed must be returned, grants and gifts must be mutual, debts must be repaid and leaders of people are sure to incur debts and losses. O people! listen and obey, even if an Abyssinian slave is in command over you, so long as he leads you according to the book of God.

All customs and practices of Jāhiliyyah are under my feet, and so are blood revenges, and money rights arising therefrom, until Doomsday.

O people, surely your Lord is One, and your father is one. You all belong to Adam, and Adam was created of clay. No Arab is superior to a non-Arab or vice versa. No white man is superior to a black man and vice verse.'

God said: 'Surely the noblest amongst you are those who are most God-fearing amongst you'.¹

There ends the second part of the Farewell Address.

6. Central Themes of the Farewell Address

Seen in proper historical perspective, the Farewell Address will be understood as an absolute breaking away from the pre-Islamic age of *Jahiliyyah* — or moral ignorance — and as an inauguration of a new and great civilization. It categorically rejects the thinking and attitudes of *Jahiliyyah* on the one hand and on the other looks forward to universal future civilization.

In his earnest desire to do away with *Jahiliyyah* once and for all, the Prophet declared the following principles:

1. All evil customs, traditions, conventions and practices pertaining to *Jahiliyyah* are to be condemned and henceforth totally rejected. In the Prophet's words, these evil customs are 'under his feet'. The customs referred to by the Prophet in particular were those that relate essentially to paganism, idol-worship or immoral and inhuman masculine attitudes and practices.
2. Against the *Jahiliyyah* practices of manslaughter, armed robbery, and violation of sexual decency, the Prophet declared the sanctity of human life, of private property and of sexual integrity.
3. Usury or *Ribā* was widespread in Makkah and other Arabian towns, and the basis of socio-economic

¹*al-Hujurat* 49:13.

exploitation. The Prophet declared it unlawful, affirming the war which the Qur'ān has waged against it.

4. The practice of avenging the murder of fellow-tribesmen by indiscriminate killing of members of the tribe to which the murderer belonged, is likewise abolished. The Prophet declared that he had waived his right to avenge the blood of a cousin of his, killed in the *jāhiliyyah* period.
5. It was the bad habit of the people of the *Jāhiliyyah* to tamper with the natural order and duration of the four sacred months, so as to dodge their sanctity — if it suited them to launch war during any of these sacred months, they would declare that they had decided to defer the coming of these holy months. In this way, they falsely absolved themselves of the charge of having violated their sanctity. This malpractice of tampering with the calendar was condemned and abolished by the Prophet.
6. Many of the privileges enjoyed by the Quraysh were undeserved. The Prophet abolished them, except for custodianship of the sacred sanctuary — *al-Haram* — and the provision of water for pilgrims.
7. All kinds of injustice, aggression and exploitation are denounced unreservedly. Men are declared equal to one another; discrimination on the basis of social status, wealth, race or colour is declared void.
8. The sanctity of wedlock is affirmed, promiscuity wholly condemned and rejected. Fornicators are to be severely punished. Married fornicators are to be stoned.

9. The purity of descent and genealogy is declared sacrosanct — whoever claims a descent he knows not to be his or hers, shall be cursed by God. The need to preserve this purity seems to have been a major factor in adopting a tough line against fornication and permissiveness. Another major aspect of the war declared against sexual permissiveness is foundation of family life upon the sanctity of the marriage bond.
10. The rights and possessions of future generations must be guarded. The only way to do this is through a strict observance of inheritance rights. So bequests to prospective inheritors exceeding one third of total inheritance are banned. Objective and correct appointment of inherited rights, presupposes pure and authentic lines of family descent, a further reason for forbidding extra-marital sexual relations.

The Farewell Address is equally notable for the universal message it has for mankind as a whole:

1. There is the basic and primordial call to mankind to worship Allah alone, not associating any partner with Him. Implicit in the Qur'ānic verse, 'Today I have perfected your religion for you ...', revealed during the Farewell Pilgrimage, is the claim that pure monotheism is only preserved in Islam. The other supposedly monotheistic religions of Judaism and Christianity have lost that doctrine of pure monotheism, being falsified and tampered with through the ages. This view has been expressed in another Qur'ānic verse which affirms: 'Surely the (true) religion with God is Islam.'

2. There is the warning concerning Satan, as the symbol of all evil. True, this warning is primarily directed to Muslims, but its relevance to all monotheistic worshippers is obvious.
3. There is the emphasis on the priceless worth of human life. Wilful taking of human life cannot be tolerated and must be punishable by death. Even if the life is taken by mistake, the *Diyah* (blood ransom or compensation) must be paid to the relatives of the killed person. The *diyah* is a token of the very high worth of human life, not a price for the life taken. Such a high value does Islam accord to human life that it declared that whoever kills one man deliberately, it is as if he has killed all of mankind.
4. The Farewell Address emphasizes the need and concern that women be treated kindly and compassionately. It reminds husbands that the enjoyment in marriage of a wife's body is a great blessing of God — they should appreciate and be grateful for this blessing, and partake of it equitably and justly. Husbands are warned not to take advantage of the fact that women depend on them for their livelihood. At the same time, both marriage partners are informed of their mutual rights and obligations. Divorce, while permissible as a last resort in Islam, must be avoided if at all possible. Of all the permitted acts, it is the most detested by God. In desperate circumstances, the husband of an aggressive wife (*Nāshizah*) may even resort to bodily chastisement, but on condition that the chastisement be neither severe nor excessive.
5. Married women are advised not to socialize or fraternize freely with other men, if they wish to preserve the integrity of their marriage, and to obey God's commandments.

6. The eternal value of the Qur'ān and the Prophet's *Sunnah* as the source of Divine guidance are strongly emphasized. The Qur'ān remains the only divinely-revealed text that is totally intact. It has been preserved by God Himself against any attempt to alter or tamper with it. All other revealed texts were falsified and tampered with. The commandment to heed the Qur'ān is addressed to all mankind — to anyone desiring to avail himself of the wisdom and guidance of a divinely - revealed text. The teaching and the wisdom of the Prophet are also a valuable source of divine guidance, available to all mankind. 'Ā'ishah described the character of the Prophet as 'Qur'ānic'. The Qur'ān itself has praised the Prophet thus: 'Surely you are of great character (O Muhammad).'

7. The Farewell Address strongly draws the attention of mankind to the unity of their origin, their common descent from one father, Adam, and one mother. No valid rational basis for any type of racial prejudice exists, according to Islam. Moreover, the Address reminds us that Adam was created of a very humble stuff, namely clay. The natural link between racial prejudice and arrogance is obvious. In the Farewell Address, the Prophet sought to strike at the very root of those evils, the probable cause of a large share of man's suffering, misguidedness and misery. In view of the wide renown of erroneous modern speculations about the origin of man, speculations that claim the prestige of being 'scientific', the worth of the Prophet's declaration on the subject cannot be overestimated. While modern 'scientific' speculations like Darwin's natural selection hypothesis can be used or abused to support the claims to superiority of certain races and so justify and promote racial conflict, the Prophet of Islam, over fourteen

centuries ago, sought to eradicate the very ground of such false claims. Truly, Muhammad was and remains, as the Qur'ān describes him, a mercy for mankind: 'Truly, We have not sent you except as a mercy for mankind.'

It is on account of his eagerness to fulfil the Qur'ān's vision of the unity of mankind, the promise of his ministry, that the Prophet Muhammad spoke on these themes, for humanity as a whole: that is why he uses the phrase 'O People' though his audience was exclusively Muslim. He was in fact addressing human conscience everywhere and in all times to come. Given the profound divisions and suffering of humanity today, one cannot help but wonder what a mercy would descend upon this miserable world, if the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad were heeded.

Islam has been described as the greatest leveller of all ideologies, because, as far as the human worth of man is concerned, it will not countenance any kind of discrimination. The Qur'ān declares, in this respect:

O People, We have created you male and female, and have made you 'different' people and tribes, so that you will be acquainted with each other. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God are those of you who are God-fearing.¹

The phenomenon of the diversity of colour, language and race has been explained in the Qur'ān as a sign of God's omnipotence and omniscience:

¹*Ibid.*

Of His Signs is the creation of Heavens and earth, and the diversity of your tongues and colours, surely therein are signs for mankind.¹

It is little wonder that the concept of human brotherhood should enjoy such prominence in the founding principles and formative years of the first Muslim state and society set up by the Prophet in Madinah. Brotherhood among believers was the solid base of that state and society. The Prophet paired the *Ansār* and *Muhājirūn* as brothers, to look after one another. This principle of brotherhood, so prominent in the *Sahifah* is reaffirmed in this last of the Prophetic public proclamation, the Farewell Address.

7. 'I am Merely a Conveyer'

Perhaps no mortal man has been as much loved and adored as the Prophet Muhammad Has been by Muslims. Yet, at no time in Muslim history was Muhammad thought of as divine or supernatural in any way. The question of worshipping him thus never arises. Certainly he himself never let any opportunity pass to stress that he was merely a messenger, a mere conveyer of God's message to mankind. In the Farewell Address, he reaffirmed his essential role as a humble servant and conveyer of God's message of mankind.

For this reason, the Prophet never forgot to say, after every major theme of the Farewell Address:

'Have I conveyed Your message, O Lord? Bear witness, O Lord!'

8. The Common Ground Between the *Sahifah* and the Farewell Address

If the *Sahifah* represents that universalist, multi-racial, multi-cultural dimension of the first Muslim society and state, the Farewell

¹*ar-Rūm* 30:22.

proclamation affirms the universal message of Islam to all mankind. And if the *Sahifah* represents the ideological, legal foundation of the Muslim *Ummah*, a foundation wide in scope and so far-reaching in its ultimate purposes and objectives, the Farewell Address represents the broad lines of Islamic *Da'wah* (mission) to humanity at large.

The two documents share a common concern for, and emphasize, basic human dignity and basic human rights. Both documents affirm the absolute unity of God and His sole prerogative as the Creator of man and of the heavens and the earth. It is because of the creaturehood of man before God, that man is obliged to worship and to thank Him. God's absolute domination of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them includes man who is well-advised to pray to Him for help and guidance. Such is the theme of the opening chapter of the Qur'an— *Al-Fatihah*. The *Fatihah* has been likened to the Lord's Prayer of the Gospel.

It was also a common theme of both *Sahifah* and Farewell Address to stress the sanctity of human life, private property and sexual integrity. The concern for freedom, security and peace in the life of man is an overriding consideration in both documents.

In both documents injustice and aggression are condemned, while equality and fraternity of the human race are emphasized. In the *Sahifah*, the Prophet's authority in Madinah was founded on the exemplary role as a just and compassionate statesman. In the Farewell Address, the eternal message of the Qur'an and the wisdom of the Prophet's *Sunnah* were stressed as the only hope for the deliverance of man from error and falsehood. The war against injustices suffered by humanity, implicit in the themes of the Farewell Address, also serves as a demonstration of the Prophet's role as a dispenser of mercy and compassion to all mankind.

If one of the central objectives of the *Sahifah* was to prepare the ground for a final onslaught on the Quraysh, the symbol and fortress of

idol-worship, the Farewell Address directed much of Muslim energy and attention to ensure the complete destruction of paganism in Arabia. The warnings against Satan were meant to urge the Muslims not to lay down their ideological weapons in the war against evil and idolatry.

The general direction of the *Sahifah* was inward towards Makkah and the Quraysh, the direction of the Farewell Address was outward in the direction of the north, where the power centres of the world at that time were located. But the orientation in both documents is the same — to push the frontiers of Islam forward, the peoples and territories that have so far not heeded the call of Islam to pure, unmixed, uncompromised monotheism.

The above article has been taken from Zakaria Bashier's *Sunshine at Madinah*, U.K. Islamic Foundation, 1990 pp 120-138 and the original text of the Farewell Address from *An Introduction to Islam* by Mrs. Nargis Naqvi (Ed), the NBF, 1992.