

Fifth Speech in the Conference: 'The Muslim Youth... Pioneers of Real Change'

Addressing the Identity Crisis of the Muslim Youth

Assalamu alaikum wa Rahmatullah wa Barakatahu

(1) Introduction:

- My dear sisters and distinguished guests, the identity crisis affecting many of our Muslim youth is one of the most pressing issues affecting this Ummah. And as with any crisis, addressing it effectively and with urgency is imperative. It is imperative for it will determine the success of our children and ourselves in this life and the next. And it is imperative for it is integral to the success of the future of this Ummah and the status of our Deen in this world.

- Dear sisters, the great scholar of Islam, Imam Ghazali (RM) once said, *“A child is a trust in the hands of its parents. And its pure heart is an unblemished precious jewel, free of any engraving or form. It is amenable to being engraved and moulded in any direction. If it is habituated and taught to be good, it will be raised upon this. Such a child will be successful in this world and the next and his parents, teachers and educators will all share in his reward. But if the child is habituated to evil and neglected, he will turn out to be unfortunate and fall to destruction, and his sin will be shared by those responsible for his upbringing. If accustomed to evil and left untended, it turns out unfortunate and is destroyed.”*

- Dear sisters, truly the hearts of our children when young are pure, untampered with, and like a precious jewel. If they are immersed in the Deen in the correct manner, and become accustomed to the Haqq and the goodness which flows from it then they will Insha Allah become youth whose hearts are solid upon the truth, confident in their Islamic beliefs, steadfast upon their Islamic obligations, courageous in speaking up for their Deen and against falsehood and oppression and with a love for righteousness and a distaste for what their Lord (swt) describes as corrupt, immoral, and unjust. They will be a source of goodness for their families, their communities, their societies, and this Ummah. And they will be the ones embodying the qualities to create real change in this world, shouldering the responsibility and empowered with the sound Islamic solutions to lift this Ummah and indeed this world from the countless problems and oppression that it faces today.

- But how do we achieve this goal? How do we build and preserve the Islamic identity in our youth and prepare them to deal with the great challenges they face in holding on to their Deen, speaking up for their Deen, and struggling for their Deen?

- Today, I would like to address some key points and some core concepts that need to be built within our youth which are absolutely vital in addressing this identity crisis, and to empower them to overcome the challenges they face effectively Insha Allah.

- But sisters, first there is a question that we must answer for ourselves – as parents, as a community, and as an Ummah - if we are to effectively deal with the identity crisis of our youth. And that is – what do we truly want for our children? Do we see Islam and Islam alone in all its aspects – spiritual, moral, social, and political as the only means of saving our children from the soul-destroying problems that so many of the youth face today; the only means of enabling them to make a truly positive contribution to the advancement of humanity and the betterment of this world, as well as guaranteeing them ultimate success in this life and the next?

- OR are there other values, ideas, traditions that are not based upon Islam that we shape our own views, actions, outlook on success and aspirations for ourselves and our children upon that causes us to compromise our Deen, creating mixed messages and confusion in the eyes of our youth, and even resentment in their minds towards Islam?

- How for example, can we expect our children to avoid relationships outside marriage, if we allow the dramas, films and music which promote, glamourize and desensitize the immorality of such relationships to enter our living rooms, or if we accept for men and women to mix freely in our social gatherings and weddings in contradiction to Islam?

- How can we build a mentality in our youth that the ultimate success is gaining the Pleasure of our Rabb and entering the Gardens of Jannah, if we accept for them to compromise their prayers, their Islamic dress and other obligations in order for them to succeed in education or secure employment or a high-flying job, leading them to believe that what really matters is status, wealth and acquiring the things of this life?

- How can we nurture our young to abide by the expectations of Allah (swt), when our expectations for how they dress, how they behave, who they marry, their allegiances, their political views are based on non-Islamic ideals, traditions, nationalism, the man-made democratic system or the expectations of what the family or community will say, rather than what Allah (swt) ordains?

- And how can we inspire our youth to be courageous and to stand up for Islam when we are fearful of encouraging them to speak up for their Ummah in Palestine, Syria and across the world, or against attacks on our beloved Prophet (saw) and Deen, or against Western wars and tyrants in the Muslim world, or in support of the Shariah or the System of Allah - the Khilafah - out of fear that they will be viewed as an extremist and come under the radar of oppressive governments.

- Dear sisters, if we present confused messages and double standards to our youth through our own views, words and actions, we will never be able to effectively deal with the identity crisis they are facing. The first step of saving our children therefore is to re-evaluate our own identity and consistency in the adherence to our Deen.

(2) Establishing the Aqeedah with Conviction:

- Having addressed this important initial point, sisters, what are the other key steps that we need to take to deal with the identity crisis in our youth?

- Firstly sisters, one of the most precious gifts that we can give to our children is the ability to think for themselves about life and the world, in a manner where they are able to distinguish the truth from the falsehood. This means firstly, enabling them to establish the truth of the Islamic Aqeedah with absolute conviction by providing them with the concrete rational proofs that establish with 100% certainty the existence of a Creator and that the Qur'an is His Word – as Allah (swt) has said,

﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوْا﴾

“Only those are the believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and afterward doubt not...” [Al-Hujraat: 15].

- In today's world sisters, where our youth are bombarded with speeches in the media or online to disprove Islam, attack its beliefs, create fear in practicing Islam, and that argue that belief in a God and religion is irrational, backward, only for the weak-minded – establishing the Islamic Aqeedah with absolute intellectual conviction is vital. It is this that will transform Islam from something that many youth view as something just handed down from their parents, to that which they are intellectually convinced has the correct answers to life and hence should define their thoughts and actions.

- It is this certainty in belief which will make Jannah (Paradise) and Jahannum (the Hell-Fire) a fixed reality in the eyes of our youth Insha Allah, and accountability to Allah a strong concept in their minds, leading them to live their lives in accordance to His (swt)'s Laws and Limits Insha Allah. AND it is this certainty in belief which will also establish a clear understanding Insha Allah that the true purpose in life and correct view of success is not

chasing after the high-status and temporary pleasures of this life, or gaining acceptance or popularity amongst friends and society but rather securing the Pleasure of Allah (swt) and the unimaginable rewards of the Hereafter.

- Indeed sisters, in a consumerism obsessed materialistic world that is trying to create Paradise on earth for our young with dazzling temptations and pleasures galore which go against their Deen, or where pursuing the possessions of this world – the latest phone, gadget, accessory, outfit - occupies their time and attention - it is absolutely vital that we create in our youth a yearning for Jannah that lifts them above the temporary pleasures of this dunya and enables them to accept the regulations Islam places upon their lives - by consistently reminding them that all this is but a drop in the ocean compared to the unimaginable delights that await the righteous youth in Jannah – as the Prophet (saw) said,

«وَاللَّهِ مَا الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا مِثْلُ مَا يَجْعَلُ أَحَدُكُمْ إصْبَعَهُ هَذِهِ - وَأَشَارَ يَحْيَىٰ بِالسَّبَابَةِ - فِي الْيَمِّ فَلْيَنْظُرْ بِمَ يَرْجِعُ»

“The life of this world compared to the Hereafter is as if one of you were to put his finger in the ocean and take it out again then compare the water that remains on his finger to the water that remains in the ocean.”

- Dear sisters, it is this conviction in the Aqeedah and the yearning for Jannah that led the weak shepherd boy Abdullah ibn Masud (ra) to recite the Qur’an to the Quraysh, knowing he would be beaten by them; it was what led the young man Jafar ibn Abi Talib (ra) to speak on behalf of the Muslims in the court of the King of Abyssinia, unintimidated by the presence of the most eloquent of the Quraysh who were sent to speak against the believers. And sisters, it is this that will Insha Allah instill our youth with the courage to hold on to their Islamic beliefs no matter what; to stand against peer pressure, not fearing labels or being different from their friends or even being alienated due their Islamic dress, practices or opinions, and to speak up for Islam when it is being attacked.

(3) Dismantling the Lure of the Secular Liberal Way of Life:

- The second step in dealing with the identity crisis in our youth, sisters, is to build a critical way of thinking within them that empowers them to separate the lies from the truth with regards to the dominant ideas and narratives that are bombarding them from the media or society and to counter them with *hikma* (wisdom). Enabling them to dismiss the lies against Islam and dismantling the lure of the secular liberal way of life is imperative at a time when our young are being made to feel that Islam is the source of many of their problems and the chaos in this world, and that the Western liberal way of life is the path to happiness and success, and stability and prosperity in this world,

- We need to show them - that it is not Islam that has caused the epidemic of drugs, alcohol abuse, bullying, gangs, gun-crime and other criminal behavior that plagues the youth today but rather liberal values that promote a self-gratifying lifestyle and pursuing ones desires no matter the consequences. It is not Islam that has crushed the self-esteem and confidence of so many young girls because they are not able to match up to the looks of celebrities and models but rather the unrealistic Western template of beauty which is equated with success. It is not Islam which makes so many youth feel inadequate or treated like outcasts if they are not able to keep up with the latest trends in phones or designer goods but rather the capitalist materialistic culture that equates self-worth with worldly possessions. It is not Islam’s social laws that have created a culture of disrespect towards girls and women, leading to violence and sexual harassment but societies that sanctify sexual freedoms and allow the dignity of women to be degraded through their sexualization and objectification in entertainment and advertising. And it’s not Islam that has generated mass poverty and unemployment, massive inequality in wealth, and crumbling education and healthcare services across the world but rather the toxic capitalist system which has crippled economies, burdened them with huge interest-based debts, and favoured the rich over the poor.

- Alongside this sisters, we also need our youth to understand and articulate with *hikma* and proofs to those around them, that it is not some perverse Islamic ideology that is fueling terrorism but rather anger fueled by Western interference and colonial wars in the Muslim world which have killed hundreds of thousands of Muslims. We need them to discuss with clarity that it is the same Islamic beliefs that drive them to practice Islam which also oblige them to have respect for parents and teachers, to treat women with dignity, shun criminality, strive for the betterment of humanity and reject violence against innocents or mistreatment of those of other faiths. And we need our youth to understand and say with confidence that there is nothing extreme about speaking out against the injustice of governments or speaking up for the oppressed, or to call for the Islamic Shariah or Khilafah to be implemented in our lands which will replace dictatorship with guardianship for the people, replace police states with accountability and justice in governance, and that will use the wealth of our lands for the needs of the people rather than to fill the pockets of foreign governments, greedy corporations or a privileged elite few.

- Sisters, we need to make our children take ownership of the debates and dominate the narratives regarding Islam and other ways of life within their societies, armed with the truth.

(4) Understanding Islam as a Deen with Solutions to Life's Problems & Building Pride in the Islamic Culture and History:

- And finally sisters, in a world where Islam is being depicted as backward, barbaric, oppressive to women and other religions, and an historical artefact irrelevant to modern life, it is absolutely vital that we build our youth to have confidence in their Deen and see it as relevant to their lives and this 21st century world, rather than just a set of rituals and rules. This we can only achieve by making them understand Islam as a comprehensive Deen with principles, laws and solutions to modern day problems in every field of life – spiritual, moral, social, political, judicial, educational, in economics, and beyond – as Allah (swt) has said,

﴿مَا فَرَطْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ﴾

“We have neglected nothing in the Book...” [Al-Anaam: 38]

And with this, to also build pride in the Islamic culture and history and what it brings to humanity and what it achieved for this world of justice, prosperity, stability, scientific advancement, humanitarianism, protection of the rights of women and religious minorities, excellence in academia, and first-class education and healthcare systems during its centuries of rule over our Muslim lands, under the shade of the glorious Khilafah.

- Show them that it is the laws of the Islamic economic system that hold the key to the fair distribution of wealth and the creation of a prosperous economy – as demonstrated by the Khilafah of Umar bin Abdul Aziz who was informed by his official in Iraq that even after the state's money was used to fulfil the people's needs, to pay off their debts, to help in their finances for marriage, there was still money left in the treasury. Umar then instructed him to use this surplus to help the people cultivate their lands. Subhanallah!

- We need to show our youth that it is only the Islamic Deen which rejects sexual freedoms, prohibits the objectification and exploitation of women, and establishes a comprehensive framework of laws to regulate the relationship between men and women to protect their dignity that can solve the epidemic of violence and sexual abuse of women that plagues the world today.

- And, we need to show our children that it is only the Islamic system which rejects the materialistic and nationalistic approach to handling human problems and that sincerely serves the needs of humanity that can solve the refugee crisis – as exemplified by the actions of the Uthmani Khilafah in 1492, when Khalifah Bayezid II sent his entire naval fleet to rescue 150,000 European Jews who were being persecuted by the Christians during the

Spanish Inquisition and welcomed them to the lands of the Khilafah and treated them as equal citizens, allowing them to prosper.

- Dear sisters, it is building this pride in the Islamic culture and history within our youth, and the understanding of Islam as a comprehensive Deen with solutions to all human problems for all times and all places that will empower them to counter attacks against their Deen, reject the Western agenda to reform Islam, instill them with confidence in their Islamic identity, and enable them to speak for Islam with wisdom and strength of argument.

- But furthermore, sisters, it is discovering the true nature of Islam that will build within our youth a great sense of responsibility towards this Ummah and indeed towards humanity having recognized the great power that lies in their hands to bring real change to this world through this Deen, giving them a worthy cause to struggle for that can truly build a better future for their lands and this world, including securing their educational and economic aspirations; a cause that will not waste their energies, betray their hopes, and extinguish their zeal, nor one that will engage them in fruitless violence as a means of political change but rather a battle of ideas to establish this Deen in authority, following the Sunnah of the Prophet (saw).

- Dear sisters, it is all this that will build our Muslim youth to be “Pioneers of real change”, empowered with Islam, harnessing the passion and immense energy that our youth have to make a real difference in this world but in a manner which gains the Pleasure of their Rabb and secures for them great rewards in the Akhirah. And it is through raising our youth to rise to this great challenge that will also Insha Allah facilitate the swift return of the glorious Khilafah state upon the methodology of the Prophethood, which sisters is the leadership which will serve as the true guard of the Islamic identity of our children – a state which will immerse them in the noble Islamic values and generate an environment that will constantly remind them of their accountability to Allah and the importance of striving for the Hereafter; a state whose media and education system will promote the righteous ideas and actions, nurturing the taqwa of our youth and their love for their Deen. It will create a mass youth of distinguished Islamic personalities who exemplify noble behavior and are devoted servants of Allah, shouldering the burdens of their Ummah, fierce opponents of injustice, and embodying the characteristics of leaders of humanity.

- Sisters, the battle to protect the Islamic identity of our future generation will never be won without the urgent establishment of this system - the Khilafah upon the methodology of the Prophethood. So in addition to building the Islamic concepts within our youth today, let us also turn our attention and exert our full efforts to return this noble state to our lands and through it build a generation of youth who are a source of pride for this Ummah and who stand as a model and source of inspiration to the youth of this world.

Allah (swt) says,

﴿وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ﴾

“...the greatest bliss is the Good Pleasure of Allah. That is the supreme success.”
[At-Taubah: 72]

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