



Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura

Friday Sermon

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The Danger of Arrogance in Knowledge

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ، وَأَمَرَنَا بِالتَّقْوَى
وَالْخُلُقِ الْكَرِيمِ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ،
وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ، اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلَى
سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ.
أَمَّا بَعْدُ، فَيَا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ، اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ
مُسْلِمُونَ.

My blessed brothers,

Let us increase our righteousness for Allah s.w.t. by fulfilling His commands and abstaining from committing His prohibitions. Hopefully through this, Allah s.w.t. will accept all our good deeds and forgive all our shortcomings, Amin.

My brothers,

This month's Friday sermons have been reminding us about our role in becoming a source of hope and mercy for mankind. In

fact, within Islamic law itself we are able find the Mercy and Wisdom of Allah s.w.t. that being said, let us all observe one more important guideline in our lives. Allah s.w.t. declares in Surah Az-Zukhruf, verse 37:

وَإِنَّهُمْ لَيَصُدُّونَهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُّهْتَدُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

Meaning: *“And indeed, the devils avert them from the way [of guidance] while they think that they are [rightly] guided.”*

This verse which I have just recited reminds us to prevent ourselves from developing any feelings of superiority over others. Just as what has been mentioned by Imam Al-Ghazali in his book “Ihya’ Ulumuddin”, when he wrote about the importance for a Mukmin to prevent himself from the acts of arrogance, conceit, and other repulsive attitudes. This is because the more knowledgeable a person becomes, the more humility he should portray, not the otherwise.

Therefore, it is highly important for us to seek knowledge and put it into practice to the best of our ability. As we know, the command to read and learn was the first divine revelation. This is due to the fact that knowledge removes any form of ignorance and save us from being led astray.

Dear brothers,

Alhamdulillah (all praise be to Allah), year after year we are seeing an increase in the quantity of educated and learned members of our society. Our community has strived to attend courses and participate in self-improvement programs held at various public institutions, private education centres as well as Islamic education providers. These educational programs do not only cover religious knowledge, but they also include various types of knowledge, with hopes that our knowledge are increased and skills are upgraded.

My brothers,

However, throughout our attempt to learn and apply the knowledge we have acquired, we must be careful not to fall into the trap of arrogance. When a person is blinded by arrogance and pride, he will lose the sense of wisdom, hope and mercy towards others. This might cause him to develop a thinking that he is in the right while others are in the wrong. This attitude could then cause him to hastily accuse others as heretics. Even worse is when he thinks that his acts of worship are better than the deeds of others. Some have even gone to the extent of breaking kinship and ties with their own family members merely due to difference of opinion in a particular religious issue. We must strive to protect ourselves from falling into such destructive and detrimental situation. Rasulullah s.a.w. once said:

أَلَا أُخْبِرُكُمْ بِأَهْلِ النَّارِ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ قَالَ كُلُّ عَتَلٍ جَوَاطِ مُسْتَكْبِرٍ

Which means: “*Shall I not inform you about the inmates of Hell?*’
They answered, ‘Surely.’ He said, ‘It is every violent, impertinent and proud man.’” [Muttafaq ‘Alaih]

Taking pride in knowledge clearly goes against the vast scholarship tradition in Islam. Islam embraces difference of opinion amongst people from its very beginning until today. A person who is truly well learned in religious knowledge, should be able to see the positive impacts of difference of opinions. He will realize that the difference of opinions amongst juristic scholars is neither disruptive nor misleading. Indeed, this difference is one of the many blessings that Allah bestows upon this ummah. It allows us to apply Islamic rulings that are suitable to our situations and capabilities.

Beloved brothers,

Islam has laid out several guidelines in pursuing knowledge. I would like to share three guidelines to avoid arrogance in our hearts in our attempt to seek and apply knowledge:

First: Have good thoughts of others.

For example, when we find that someone has a different opinion in a religious issue, develop positive thoughts of him. Do not be

too quick to accuse or judge him as being astray. There is a probability that his opinion is based on a reliable evidence within the religion and amongst the scholars. Having good thoughts of others also makes us humble and consequently erases any feeling of arrogance in ourselves.

Second: Avoid talking about something that we are unsure of.

Although we have attended some classes or courses, it does not mean that we are experts and capable of giving our opinions in every religious issue that come our way. In doing so, we will not find ourselves giving hasty opinions or views on religious matters. Instead, we should refer these issues to religious teachers who are experts in handling religious queries. This will make us more aware of the limits of our knowledge and avoid debating with those who are of different opinions.

Let us observe the following saying of Ibn Abbas r.a.: *“I humble myself when seeking knowledge, so I am honoured when asked to spread knowledge.”*

Third: Continue our efforts in seeking knowledge.

We should not stop seeking knowledge because the reality is that there is still so much that we do not know. Give our very best to increase our understanding of a particular set of knowledge by attending classes and courses that are offered either at mosques or other local educational institutions.

Remember, studying and pursuing a particular set of knowledge is part of the main fundamentals taught by Rasulullah s.a.w. to his ummah. Spreading of knowledge is also part of the important foundations in Singapore, just like how Muslim traders who came to Singapore had spread knowledge to our forefathers. They brought with them their knowledge to be shared with the local communities. They also endowed their lands by constructing buildings to disseminate knowledge like mosques, madrasahs and the like, for the benefit of the community. The importance of knowledge is also something that was emphasized by the first generation of Malay-Muslim leaders after Singapore's independence. They have laid out several principles and foundations in developing the knowledge of the Muslim community in Singapore. The result was that several educational organizations like Yayasan Mendaki were established. This organization was founded to shape and nurture a culture of seeking and pursuing knowledge in our society. Today, several campaigns including 'Raikan Ilmu' ('Celebrate Knowledge') are organized by Yayasan Mendaki to encourage the society to improve themselves by pursuing knowledge.

Let us together support such efforts by taking part in educational programmes that are offered to us. May Allah s.w.t. grant us His guidance and direction in our efforts to pursue knowledge. May we gain His mercy and love. Amin ya Rabbal 'Alamin.

بَارِكِ اللَّهُ لِي وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعَنِي وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِمَا فِيهِ مِنَ
الآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، وَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي وَمِنْكُمْ تِلَاوَتَهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ
الْعَلِيمُ، أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ الْعَظِيمَ لِي وَلَكُمْ، وَلِسَائِرِ
الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ، وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ، فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ يَا
فَوْزَ الْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ وَيَا نَجَاةَ التَّائِبِينَ.