



The General Presidency for the Affairs of  
the Grand Holy Mosque and the Prophet's Holy Mosque

Translation of the Two Holy Mosques Khutbahs  
A Joint Project



Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University  
College of Languages and Translation

المسجد الحرام

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## **The Perils of Selfishness on the Muslim Ummah**

### **Khutbah Topic**

His Eminence Sheikh Saud Al-Shuraim –May Allah protect him– delivered this Friday’s Khutbah titled “**The Perils of Selfishness on the Muslim Ummah**” in which he addressed the problem of selfishness, which is sometimes referred to as the *ego* or *egoism*). He warned against pursuing it and explained its perilous effects on the Muslim *Ummah*. He showed that certain people seek self-praise by saying ‘I’ and supported his arguments by quotations from the Holy Qur’ān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet (May Allah’s *Salat* and Peace be upon him).

### **Part one**

Praise be to Allah the First and the Last, the Obvious and the Hidden; He created everything with His Knowledge and precise determination. Verily, all praise is due to Him in the Herein and in the Hereafter ﴿**No vision can grasp Him, but His Grasp is over all vision. He is the Most Subtle and Courteous, Well Acquainted with all things.**﴾ [Al-An’ām: 103]. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Almighty Allah alone with no associate, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His Servant and Messenger –Master of the first and the last generations of Adam’s children, and the leader of the *Al-Ghurr-ul-Muhajjaleen*.<sup>1</sup> May Allah’s *Salat* (Graces, Honours, Mercy), Peace and Blessing be upon him, his virtuous and immaculate family, his wives –mothers of the believers– his Companions and *tabi’in* (the contemporaries of the Companions of the Prophet [May Allah’s *Salat* and Peace be upon him] after his death) and upon those who follow them righteously till the Day of Judgement.

<sup>1</sup> This is how the followers of the Prophet [May Allah’s *Salat* and Peace be upon him], will be called on the Day of Resurrection. They are those who perform *wudhū* (ablution) regularly and properly; such ablution would leave a radiant trace on their faces, arms and feet.



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Now then,

I exhort you, O people, as I exhort myself, to heed Allah's recommendation to the ancient predecessors and last successors; He (May he be extolled) said *﴿And to Allâh belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And verily, We have recommended to the people of the Scripture before you, and to you (O Muslims) that you (all) fear Allâh, and keep your duty to Him, But if you disbelieve, then unto Allâh belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth, and Allâh is Ever Rich (Free of all wants), Worthy of all praise.﴾*[Al-Nesaa: 131]

Therefore, servants of Allah, observe *tagwa* of Allah and obey Him in public and in private, in wrath and in serenity; worship Him and thank Him, to Him you shall return.

Servants of Allah!

There is a four-letter word in Arabic that could cause inevitable quake upon making contact, physically and figuratively, with a member of the coherent community. The quake would certainly be followed by a crack that would cause the crumbling of adjacent building blocks and eventually the collapse of substantial parts of the building, and possibly the whole building.

Verily, servants of Allah, it is literally a four-letter word, but its meaning needs book lengths or volumes to explain. It is a four-letter word that societies have choked on; it has caused hoarseness in the voice of advisors and social reformists, and has created a lot commotion and uproar in social ethics.

These four letters uttered by all, or most, of us. This Arabic word is *atharah* (أثرة). Yes, it is *atharah*. You can also, if you like, call it "selfishness", as it is known informally amongst us, or the term that the educated use: "the ego" or "self-centeredness". Regardless of the multiplicity of *signifiers* used, the *signified* is the same. No matter how many interpretations and conceptualisations the word may assume, they are all assigned the same negative connotation.

Yes, servants of Allah! *Athara* is selfishness that incites one to give priority to one's personal desires and interests in total disregard for the public and private rights of others. It is the kind of selfishness that would virtually cause blindness, deafness and short-sightedness. An egotist cannot see the world but through an acute and dark angle that allows him to discern nothing but himself and his own interests in total indifference to the other Muslims' interests.



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In the egotist's code of ethics there is no consideration whatsoever for the family or society. For such people, life is nothing but their own interests and not anybody else's. Allah has deprived them of that *sweet feeling of faith* that may not obtain with such vicious characteristics.

Indeed, the Prophet (May Allah's Salat and Peace be upon him) said, ***"None of you will have complete faith until he desires for his brother (in Islam) what he desires for himself."*** [Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim]

The word 'I' acquires an egotistic dimension that gradually inflates into a mental and moral tumour. Then the egoist can say nothing that does not begin with *I*. He may not enter into any deal without asking, *"What's in it for me?"* This classifies him along with the "people of the ego" such as Pharaoh who described himself as ***"I am your lord, most high"*** [Al-Nāzi'āt: 24] and the Nimrod, who said ***"I give life and cause death."*** [Al-Baqarah: 258]

Those people of the 'ego' are like their leader and predecessor Lucifer, may Allah's curse be upon him, who brought havoc to their moral code when he said to his Creator and Lord, ***"I am better than him (Adam), You created me from fire, and him You created from clay."*** [Al-A'rāf: 12]

Servant of Allah!

The value of society lies in its morals. Unless each individual acknowledges that he is part of his society, he will see that he alone *is* society. This is the painful *atharah*.

A society, whose members know nothing except the word *I*, will achieve no success. Like a good family, society members cherish all that is good and discard all that is evil. What contributes to the common good is allowed, and what is ruinous is disallowed. There is no place for egotism. A society whose members are unable to see but themselves will be doomed.

Societies will not be able to stand on their own if they lack consideration and respect for the lawful rights of others, an obligation Allah entrusted to each individual so he may carry it out in accordance with what would please Him (Sublime be He) and not himself.

The Prophet (May Allah's Salat and Peace be upon him) said, ***"The parable of the one taking care of Allah's command is like a group of passengers sharing a ship. Some took the upper deck; and some the lower. If the lower deck passengers wanted to have access to water, they had to go up. So they would say, 'If only we create a hole in our part of the ship without causing damage to the people of the upper deck!' If they allowed them to do what they wanted, they would all perish. But if they prevented them, they would all be saved!"*** [Narrated by Bukhari]



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Yes, servants of Allah! If the people of the upper deck were so egotistic and said, *'It's none of our business, let them do what they want,'* everybody would perish. Selfishness has no place when public interest is at stake.

Our pure *sharia* has in the strongest possible terms urged Muslims to sublimate the soul and dissuade it from evil acts that may induce pride, egotism and self-centeredness. Such evil behaviour gives priority to personal interests at the expense of public interests.

Jāber Ibn Abdullah (May Allah be pleased with him) said, *"I went to see the Prophet about a debt on my father. I knocked on the door, and he asked, 'Who is it?' 'It is I,' I answered. 'I, I,' he responded as if he hated it."* [Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim]

The word has found its way into the general currency of our everyday language. It does not normally signify that the user is bragging about himself or is aiming at anything beyond introducing himself. Yet, the Prophet (May Allah's Salat and Peace be upon him) dislike it with the intention of establishing among His (Islamic) *Ummah* humility and leniency and precluding any signs of arrogance, self-admiration and self-centeredness beyond what Allah Almighty has permitted.

Now then, may Allah protect you!

Selfishness has reigned over many societies and got deeply rooted in families, neighbours, knowledge circles, and labour markets; it has produced laziness in voluntary work and inflamed competition in self-interest endeavours. In addition, it has helped lay to rest the virtue of intercession and mutual benefit among people. Instead, it has fostered bribery, malignancy, and blackmailing.

So if, on the one hand, the Prophet (May Allah's Salat and Peace be upon him) has prohibited for his *Ummah* to stop giving what they have to give for the sake of Allah or to ask for what is not theirs, selfishness, on the other hand, strikes the selfish with violent voracity and mad desire for the accumulation of material wealth. A selfish person would have nothing to say except 'give me', 'give me'. Such is indeed the epidemic of societies!

Ibn Al-Qayyim (May Allah bless his soul) said: *"Beware, indeed, beware of the tyrannical predominance of 'I', 'I own', and 'I have', for Iblis (Satan), Pharaoh, and Qārūn were afflicted with these three expressions. The following Qu'ānic statement ﴿I am better than him﴾ [Al-A'rāf: 12] was uttered by Iblis, ﴿the dominion of Egypt is mine﴾ [Al-Zukhruf: 51] was uttered by Pharaoh, and ﴿This has been given to me only because of the knowledge I possess﴾ [Al-Qasas: 78] was uttered by Qārūn."*



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O Allah! How great the Guidance of our Prophet and Example (May Allah's Salat and Peace be upon him) is in instructing his *Ummah* not to treat selfishness with selfishness! For by so doing people will be treating a disease with a disease; rather, he has guided them to what can elevate the human self (to lofty spheres) and what can accomplish the interest of the *Ummah* and the one (united) society.

He (May Allah's Salat and Peace be upon him) never guides except to what is Good and never warns except against what is Bad. He (May Allah's Salat and Peace be upon him) has said: "***You will see after me selfishness and matters which you will deem impermissible.***" They said: "*So, what do you order us to do, O Messenger of Allah?*" He said: "***Give them their right, and claim yours from Allah.***" In another version of the *Hadith*: "***Be patient until you meet me.***" [Narrated by Al-Bukhari]

May Allah bless you and me by the Glorious *Qur'ān* and the Noble *Sunnah*, and make what they contain of verses, remembrance and wisdom beneficial to you and me! This is what I have said. If it is correct, it is so thanks to Allah, but if it is wrong, it is my own fault and Satan's. I ask Allah to forgive my sins, yours, and those of all Muslims, so ask Him for forgiveness, for He is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful!



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## Part Two

Praise be to Allah for His blessings, and thanks are due to Him for His guidance and bounty.

Now then,

O servants of Allah! Islam does not dispraise anything without commending its opposite. Therefore, if the word 'I' is dispraised in certain contexts where it does not fit, there are other contexts where this same word 'I' is praised. Thus, the distance between 'I' in the context of reform or reconciliation and 'I' in the context of corruption, pride, and vanity is like the distance between earth and heaven. Good is indeed the following utterance: ***«I will bring it to you within a twinkling of an eye.»*** [Al-Naml: 40] in response to the order of one of the Prophets (Solomon). Also, the following is a good one: ***«I will tell you its interpretation, so send me forth.»*** [Yūsuf: 45] said in an attempt to interpret a dilemma that befell them. The following is also a good statement: ***«And verily, I am indeed strong, and trustworthy for such work.»*** [Al-Naml: 39] motivated by a sense of trustworthiness and dedication to public interest; for none of the afore mentioned matters was carried out for the sake of personal interest over public interest.

This is what is called *preference over oneself* which is praised by Allah's following words: ***«and give them (emigrants) preference over themselves even though they were in need of that.»*** [Al-Hashr: 9]; a person may decline his own interest for the sake of the more general interest. This is indeed a virtue only of those upon whom Allah has mercy and whom He has bestowed with manifest and latent blessings: ***«That is the Grace of Allah which He bestows on whom He Wills. And Allah is the owner of Mighty Grace.»*** [Al-Jumu'ah: 4]

In Bukhari's *Sahih*, the Prophet (May Allah's Salat and Peace be upon him) said to Al-Hassan Ibn Ali (May Allah be pleased with both of them): ***"My son, this one, is indeed a master, and Allah may reconcile through him between two great groups of Muslims."***

What the Prophet said actually took place later on when Al-Hassan Ibn Ali declined the caliphate to Mu'awiah, the scribe of Divine Revelation to the Prophet (May Allah's Salat and Peace be upon him). May Allah be pleased with all of them!



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Preference over oneself and the suppression of the self's desires and interests whenever they contradict public Muslim interests is clear here; hence, bloodshed may be averted and Muslims may be able to unite their word.

Biographers have mentioned with approval the story of Abdullah Ibn Huthāfah Al-Sahmi when he and some other Companions were taken captives by the Roman Caesar. The Caesar punished him severely and then said to him: "*Would you kiss my head and I set you free?*" Abdullah said: "*And you set free all Muslim captives?*" Caesar said: "*And all of them.*" Abdullah Ibn Huthāfah said to himself: "*I kiss the head of one of Allah's enemies and he sets free the Muslim captives; there is no harm in that!*" So, he kissed Caesar's head and the latter set the Muslim captives free. When Omar Alfārūq (May Allah be pleased with him) knew about the story, he kissed Abdullah Ibn Huthāfah's head (May Allah be pleased with all of them).

Such is altruism that would bury selfishness and self-centeredness. An altruist lives like a candle which imparts light on his people and society. He can sense the throbbing of his heart and the swift blinking of his eyes, but he can never forget the *hadith* of the Chosen One (May Allah's Salat and Peace be upon him): "***Do not envy one another; do not inflate prices (in your dealings); do not hate one another; do not shy away from one another; and do not undercut one another (in the marketplace), but be brothers, O servants of Allah.***" [Narrated by Imam Muslim]

(The Sheikh quotes two lines of poetry paraphrased as follows):

*Success is his he who listens to Muhammad's hadith  
And then follows in his footsteps (example);  
For the Chosen One has said warning us:  
You will see after me selfishness.*

Ask Allah –may He have mercy on you– to send His *Salat* (Graces, Honours, Mercy) and Peace on the best of His creatures and the purest of mankind, Muhammad Ibn `AbdAllāh, who is given *al-hawdh* (a basin in Paradise) and is vested with intercession, for Allah sent His *Salat* (Graces, Honours, Mercy) and Peace on him and then ordered His angels, that are praising His sanctity, to do likewise and called out to you, O believers, to ask Him to send His *Salat* (Graces, Honours, Mercy) and Peace on him. Allah Almighty says: ***O you who believe! Send your Salât (ask Allāh to bless) on him (Muhammad peace be upon him), and (you should) greet (salute) him with the Islāmic way of greeting (salutation i.e. As-Salāmu 'Alaikum).*** [Al-Aḥzāb: 56]

O Allah! Send Your *Salat* (Graces, Honours, Mercy) and Peace on Your Servant and Messenger Muhammad who has the brightest face and the most glorious forehead, on his four Caliphs, Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman and Ali, on all the Companions of Your Prophet Muhammad



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(May Allah's Salat and Peace be upon him), and the *tabi'īn* and on those who righteously followed them till the Day of Judgment! O Allah! Be also pleased with us all, along with them, by Your Pardon and Generosity, O You, Most Merciful, Most Compassionate of all!

O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims! O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims! O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims! O Allah! Fail polytheism and polytheists (who associate partners with You)! O Allah! Grant victory to Your Religion, Your Holy Book, Your Prophet's *Sunnah* and Your true servants!

O Allah! Bring an end to the suffering of Muslims! Rescue those in distress, and help those indebted pay back their debts! Cure those of us and those of the Muslims who are ill, O You, Most Merciful, Most Compassionate!

O Allah! Grant us security in our homelands! Set right our leaders and those responsible for our affairs, and make our leadership from among those who are fearful of You, who observe *taqwā*, and seek your satisfaction! O You, Lord of *al-'ālamīn* (the worlds)!

O Allah! Guide our Imam (leader) to do and say whatever you please and accept! O You the Ever-Living, the Eternal Guardian! O Allah! Make his retinue righteous, O You, the Lord of Majesty and Bounty!

O Allah! Be with our brothers and sisters who are oppressed in their religion everywhere! O Allah! Be with our brothers and sisters who are oppressed in their religion everywhere! O Allah! Grant them victory over Your enemy and theirs sooner than later, O You, the Lord of Majesty and Bounty!

﴿... Our Lord! Give us in this world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and save us from the torment of the Fire!﴾  
[Al-Baqarah: 201]