

Hijra: Migration

Originally delivered by Arshad Gamiet at Royal Holloway University of London, UK on 22nd February 2008]

“As-salámu ‘alaikum wa rahmatul láhi wa barakátuh!”

“A-úthu billáhi minash shaytánir rajeem. Bismilláhir rahmánir raheem.

Al hamdu lillahi nahmaduhu wanasta’eenahu, wanastagh-firuhu, wanatoobu ilayhi, wana’oothu Billaahi min shuroori an-fusinaa, wamin sayyi aati a’maalinaa. May-Yahdillahu fa huwal muhtad, wa may- yudlill falan tajidaa lahu waliyan murshida. Wa ash-hadu an Laa ilaaha ill-Alláh, wahdahoo laa shareeka lah, wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan ‘abduhoo warasooluh”

All Praise is due to Alláh, We praise Him and we seek help from Him. We ask forgiveness from Him. We repent to Him; and we seek refuge in Him from our own evils and our own bad deeds. Anyone who is guided by Alláh, he is indeed guided; and anyone who has been left astray, will find no one to guide him. I bear witness that there is no god but Alláh, the Only One without any partner; and I bear witness that Muhammad, sws, is His servant, and His messenger.

Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem! Ya Ay-yuhal-latheena ‘aamanut taqul-laaha, haqqa tuqaatihee wala tamu tun-na, il-la wa antum Muslimoon.”

O You who believe, – Fear Allah, as He should be feared, and die not except as Muslims, (as those who have submitted their Will to Allah)

Ya Ay-yuhal-latheena ‘aamanut taqul-laaha, wa qooloo qawlan sadeedaa. Yuslih-lakum a’maalakum wa yaghfir lakum thunoobakum, wamay yu-til-laaha warasoolah, faqad faaza fawzan atheemaa.”

O You who believe, – Be aware of Allah, and speak a straightforward word. He will forgive your sins and repair your deeds. And whoever takes Allah and His prophet as a guide, has already achieved a mighty victory...

My Dear Brothers and Sisters

Immigration, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers; these words are very common currency in the news these days. Quite often they’re misused to foster fear and hate by unscrupulous people. But moving from danger to safety is a natural order of living creatures. Animals migrate. Birds migrate. People have migrated throughout human history.

Looking around me I see many of you who, like me, were not born in Britain, although Britain has now become our home. Many of us were raised elsewhere, and we've come here to better ourselves. Our individual circumstances may differ but the common theme is that we've made a kind of *Hijra*, a migration.

A few days ago, the Muslim world marked the *Hijratur Rasool*, that original migration of Prophet Muhammad sws and his followers, over 14 centuries ago. They fled from Makka to Madina, from persecution to safety. This momentous event is the starting point of the Islamic era. The subject of Hijra, migration, is also the starting point of some major collections of Hadith, such as the 40 Hadith of Imam Nawawi: The first Hadith in this collection will be familiar to many of us:

“Actions are [judged] only according to intentions, and each [person will be judged] only [by] what he intended. Whoever migrates towards Allah and His Messenger, his migration is towards Allah and His Messenger; whoever migrates for the attainment of a worldly goal or in order to marry a woman, then his migration is [judged] only by what he migrated to.”

Brothers and sisters, some of us may have come here to study or to advance our professions and to increase our personal wealth; others may have come to find a refuge from political violence and oppression. These are perfectly good reasons for migration. But most of all, we must never leave Allah and His Prophet out of the picture. The secret of real success in this earthly life is to frame every intention, around a lifelong desire to please Allah and follow the example of his noble messenger, Muhammad sws. Whether or not we make a physical Hijra from one place to another, each one of us has to make a spiritual Hijra, from the misguidance of pleasing our own selfish ego, our lower *nafs*, to what pleases Allah.

Our intention, our *niyyat*, is crucially important. Muslims must always have a clearly defined intention before we start an action. It becomes our point of departure and our point of reference for the future. Whether we succeed or not is another matter. What really matters is the sincerity of our intention. Sincerity is the key. Intentions and actions are in our hands, but results are not. The result belongs to Allah. He gives success to whoever He pleases. We are only responsible for the intention and the action that follows it.

While on the subject, we should also remember that no matter how bad any situation appears to us, we must never despair, never become desperate. We Muslims should never become a group of desperados: “Desperate times call for

desperate measures.” That’s a motto for Hollywood movies, not for the followers of Allah’s Chosen One, Allah’s Praised One, Muhammad sws.

Dear sisters and brothers: Never give up hope of Divine help. Always remember that Allah is in control of everything, all of the time. Despite appearances, History is always in His safe hands:

“Biyadikal khair; Innaka alaa kulli shay-in qadeer!”

“In His hand is all good. Truly He has power over everything.”[Sura Al Imran 3:27]

It’s easy to feel victimized when every day, newspapers, radio and TV programmes constantly deliver bad news about Islam and the Muslims. But we must never lose heart, because this is not a punishment. It’s only a test from Allah. Did Prophet Muhammad sws and his companions not have the same, and worse, experiences? All of Allah’s Prophets had to suffer the most unspeakable hardships. So, we can take heart from the fact that we’re in good company! It’s a test of perseverance and endurance. We’re being challenged, and we must deal with these challenges in a positive and creative way. Allah knows and sees everything. He promises us victory if we remain steadfast. And He never breaks His promise. As we know, He decides the results of our actions, and He sometimes applies what is known as the law of unintended consequences. He often delivers results completely different from what his enemies intended. He never lets his believing servants down. We can see so often in the history of Islam that all the plots and plans of Allah’s enemies ultimately ended in failure.

“The unbelievers plot and plan, and Allah also plans. Allah is the best of planners.” [Sura 8:30]

Allah further reminds us, in several verses in the Holy Quran, that we should: “Travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who rejected faith.” [3:137, 6:11, 16:36, etc]

Brothers and Sisters, for every Pharaoh there is a Moses, for every Crusader there is a Salahuddin, for every racist tyrant there is a Nelson Mandela who will rise up and lead his people to freedom. Be steadfast, brothers and sisters: maintain your integrity, even when others around you seem to be losing theirs. Life is full of challenges. It’s a place of trial and tribulation for believers and a paradise for those who have no faith.

Right now, you and I could have been having lunch or shopping or watching TV or playing golf or doing something else ... but instead, we chose to be here, to remember Allah and to serve Him with love and gratitude. Right now, in

this room, while we listen to the khutbah, while we pray and thank Allah and seek His guidance, His angels are surrounding us with their wings and protecting us. We can worship Allah anywhere. Unlike churches that have to be specially consecrated for worship, a Muslim can pray anywhere that's clean. The whole earth is a mosque. The whole earth belongs to Allah.

In Sura Nur Allah reminds us that He, "Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth:" "*Allahu nuurus sama waati wa lard...*" and further on, He tells us that He has illuminated with a special light and raised the status of those places where His name is celebrated. Today we have set aside a few precious hours for Allah. We have set aside our studies, our work, our trade and commerce and our love of worldly wealth, because we aspire for something infinitely more valuable and rewarding. We want to remember Allah and we yearn to be near to Him, and to be welcomed into His Garden, when our life has ended.

Brothers and Sisters, while we are celebrating Allah's Holy Names, this Jurgens Centre is being illuminated by the divine radiance of Allah's light. We're here not just casually fulfilling a Friday obligation; we're thanking our generous Lord, we are returning His love and seeking His guidance and pleasure. This is a lifelong process of purifying ourselves, inwardly and outwardly. *Zahir and Batin,*

Some Muslims get these priorities wrong. They're more concerned with human appearances than with the human substance. Keeping up appearances, apart from being the title of a well known comedy series, is not a Sunnah of our beloved Prophet Muhammad sws. He was not concerned with appearances, but with substance. He was always much more concerned with our inward state. Sincerity, *Ikhlās*, is an unblemished state of the heart. He said that within the body there is a lump of flesh, if this is sound then the whole body will be sound and healthy. Truly, he said, it is the heart.

Brothers and Sisters! Let us avoid extremes in our behaviour. Let us maintain a healthy balance in our lives. Let us strive for *āfiyah*, so that Allah can always be pleased with us. And when He's pleased with us, He will help us to overcome all hardships. He will instil within us a sense of peace and serenity. He will instil *sakina*, into our hearts.

Alhamdu lillahi Rabbil 'Aalameen. Was-salaatu was-salaamu alaa Khairil mursaleen. Muhammadin-nabeey-yil Ummiy-yee, wa-'alaa aalihee, wasah-bihee, aj-ma'een.

Ammaa ba'ad:

Innallāha wa malaaikata yusallūna alan nabi. Yá ay yuhal latheena ámanu sallú alayhi wasalli mú tas leema. Allahumma salli alá Muhammad, wa ala áli Muhammad, kama salayta ala Ibrahim, wa ala ali Ibrahim. Allahumma barik ala Muhammad, wa

alaa áli Muhammad, kama barakta ala Ibrahim, wa ala ali ibrahim. Fil ála meen, innaka hameedun majeed.”

Part Two:

Sub’ hanallahi wal hamdu lillah, wala hawla wala quwwata illah billah yu althi yual theem.

“All glory is for Allah, and all praise is for Allah; There is no power and no strength except with Allah.”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

An important aspect of the Prophetic *Hijra* was that it brought mutual benefit for the refugees, the *muhajireen* from Makka, and the *Ansaar*, the helpers in Madina. There were no losers. It was a win-win situation. The migrants found safety from persecution, and the helpers found an inspiring leader who resolved their bitter disputes and shaped them into a model community. Until the end of time the Madina period will be held up as the perfect example of a truly Islamic state. Wherever the Muslims went: India, China, Spain, North and South Africa, they brought something of value. They improved the societies in which they found themselves: In science they paved the way for the European renaissance, the rebirth of learning. In Architecture, they constructed buildings like the Taj Mahal that seems to defy gravity. In engineering, mathematics and literature, they left a rich legacy to share with others.

What will history have to say about our present-day contribution to British society? Will our legacy be something more substantial than doner kebabs, chicken tikka and ghulab jamun? Britain has many serious social problems: Juvenile crime, teenage pregnancies, drug and alcohol abuse, and broken families, to name a few. We Muslims can show by our personal example that there is a better way to live. Islam offers good guidance and a *siraat al Mustaqeem*, a straight path to Allah’s good pleasure. The Messenger of Islam came as “*Rahmatul lil-aalameen*,” “A mercy unto all the worlds.” We have no right to keep his message to ourselves only. We have a duty to share his message.

Our beloved Prophet Muhammad sws is also described in the Holy Quran as “*Uswatul Hasanah*” the best of role models. By following in his illustrious footsteps, we must aspire to become good examples for others. Brothers and Sisters, we have to make a start somewhere. Let’s de-mystify Islam. Let’s cultivate good relations with our neighbours in the wider community. Invite them into our homes. Invite them to our Friday prayers. Let them also hear the khutbah and observe how we do our prayers. Let them see with their own

eyes that Islam as lived by 99% of Muslims is quite different to the stuff of mass hysteria that's promoted in the tabloid press.

Many British people are already more than halfway towards Islam, but they don't know it. They love fairness and justice, they are clean in their personal habits, and they are honest in their business dealings, truthful and generous hearted. Just look at the number of charities and good causes that they promote in this country. Many British people are in some aspects of their behaviour, closer to Islam than some of us Muslims are! The only thing that's missing is the *kalima shahaadah*... the Declaration of Faith. Islam is not a million miles away from where most decent, truthful and good hearted British people are. It's often just one more step to go... to acknowledge that there is no god but Allah, and to bear witness that Prophet Muhammad sws is His final Messenger. So, my dear fellow Muslims, let's help, not hinder our neighbours on their way to Islam!

Another point, let's promote unity amongst ourselves by avoiding harsh criticism of other Muslims, simply because they don't share our particular interpretation of Islam. Let us be more inclusive rather than exclusive in matters of faith. In our liberal secular world these days, it's quite an achievement to have any religious faith left at all. Let's not be harsh and judgemental. It doesn't matter whether the person next to you is a Sufi or a Salafi, a Sunni, Shia, a Deobandi or Brehelwi, an Ahle this or Ahle that. Live and let live. Let Allah be the judge. He knows who truly worships Him and who worships their own egos. Let's not do Shaytaan's work for him, by promoting division and dispute amongst ourselves. We read in Sura Al-Imran:

“Wa'tasimu bi hablil-Laahi jamee'aah...”

“And hold fast, all together, to the rope of ALLAH and not be divided; and remember the favour of ALLAH which HE bestowed upon you when you were enemies and HE united your hearts in love, so that by HIS grace you became as brothers; and you were on the brink of a pit of fire and HE saved you from it. Thus does ALLAH explain to you HIS commandments that you may be guided.” [3:104]

Brothers and sisters, let's return to the quintessential spirit, the true spirit of the *Hijra*. Let's journey away from ignorance towards Allah's wisdom. Let's migrate from the oppression of worshipping the false gods of our own egos, towards the eternal truth, the safety and security of worshipping Allah alone. This is the message of *Tawhid*, the message of Divine Unity. Now, to conclude our khutbah:

InnaAllaha, Yamuru bil adel, wal ihsaan, wa eetaa-i zil qurba; wa yanha anil fuhshaa-i, wal munkari walbaghi; ya-idzukhum lallakum tathak-karoon. (Sura 16:90),
“Surely Allah commands justice, good deeds and generosity to others and to relatives; and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, so that you may be reminded.”

Fadth kuroonee adth kurkum, wash kuroolee walaa tak furoon [2:152].

“and remember Me: I will remember you. Be grateful to Me, and do not reject faith.”

wala thikrul-Laahi akbar, Wal-Laahu ya’lamu maa tasna’oon.” [29:45].

“and without doubt, Remembrance of Allah is the Greatest Thing in life, and Allah knows the deeds that you do.”

Ameen. Aqeemus salaah!