

Q: "The last sermon of the Holy Prophet (SAW) is the basic document for awakening of consciousness of mankind for human rights." Discuss

Introduction:

The last sermon of the Holy Prophet (SAW), delivered during the Farewell Pilgrimage also known as **Khutbah al-Wada**, stands as a timeless manifesto of human rights, justice, and equality. Delivered on the 9th of Dhu-al-Hijah, in the 10th year of the Islamic calendar (632 CE), this sermon is considered a foundational document for human rights in Islam and the awakening of the human conscience. It provided a clear framework for establishing justice, social harmony, and respect for individual rights that transcend religious, racial, and gender boundaries.

This piece of paper will explore the core elements of the last sermon, focusing on its universal human rights message, its relevance to modern concepts of justice and equality, and its impact on the moral and social fabric of Islamic society. Additionally, the sermon will be compared to other historical documents of human rights to demonstrate its significance as a charter for humanity.

1 - Equality of All Human Beings:

One of the most profound messages of the last sermon is the emphasis on the equality of all human beings, regardless of race, ethnicity, or social status. The ~~pro~~ Prophet (PBUH) proclaimed that all

people are equal before God, with no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab or a white person over a black person.

Sermon Reference:

"All mankind is from Adam and Eve. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; a white has no superiority over a black, nor does a black have any superiority over a white — none have superiority over another except by piety and good action."

This declaration of equality predates many modern human rights documents, such as Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by the United Nation in 1948, which asserts that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". The sermon emphasizes that true distinction between individuals is based on their moral character and actions, not their racial or social identity, echoing modern principles of anti-racism and inclusivity.

2. Sanctity of Life, Property and Honor:

The Prophet (PBUH) highlighted the sanctity of human life, property, and honor as inviolable rights. He warned against any form of oppression, injustice, or violation of these rights among the community.

Sermon Reference:

"Your blood, your property, and your honor are sacred and inviolable, like the sanctity of this day of yours, in this month of yours,

in this city of yours."

This emphasis on the sanctity of life and property aligns with contemporary human rights frameworks that safeguard individuals from violence, theft, and exploitation. In today's world these principles are enshrined in the laws protecting human dignity, property rights, and personal security. The sermon set the foundation for a just society where individuals are protected from harm and injustice.

Comparison:

In comparison to other early human rights documents, such as the Magna Carta (1215), which primarily focused on the rights of nobles and landowners, the Prophet's sermon addressed all of humanity, offering a universal message of protection and security to all, irrespective of social class.

3. Rights of Women and Marital Responsibilities:

The Prophet (PBUH) addressed the rights of women explicitly in the last sermon, ensuring that they were treated with kindness, dignity, and fairness in all matters, particularly in marriage. He emphasized the responsibilities men have towards women and the importance of mutual respect in marital relations.

Sermon Reference:

"O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under Allah's trust and with His permission."

The recognition of women's rights in the 7th century was revolutionary, particularly in a society where women were often treated as property and denied basic human rights. The Prophet (PBUH) elevated the status of women by asserting their rights to be treated with dignity, kindness, and justice, an essential component of human rights. Today, these principles are reflected in international human rights laws that protect women from discrimination, abuse, and inequality.

Comparison:

While documents like the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens (1789) largely ignored the rights of women, focusing on male citizens, while the Prophet's (SAW) last sermon recognized women as equal partners in society, with rights and responsibilities that must be respected.

4- Prohibition of Economic Exploitation and Usury:

In the last sermon, the Prophet (PBUH) condemned the practice of usury (riba) and economic exploitation, which were prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabia. He declared all forms of interest based transactions as null and void.

Sermon Reference:

“All dues of interest (riba) are abolished. Your capital, however, is yours to keep. You will neither inflict (force) nor suffer any inequity.”
By banning usury and unjust economic practices, the Prophet (PBUH) promoted a system of fairness and equity in economic

on forgiveness, unity, and brotherhood promotes social harmony and collective progress. This principle resonates with modern efforts to foster national unity and reconciliation in post-conflict societies.

Comparison:

The Prophet's (PBUH) abolition of blood feuds contrasts with the feudal systems in medieval Europe, where vendettas and retaliatory justice were often ingrained in social systems. In Islamic society, the promotion of forgiveness and reconciliation laid the foundation for a peaceful and unified community.

6- Upholding Justice and Accountability:

The Prophet (PBUH) underscored the importance of justice and accountability, stating that all individuals are responsible for their actions and will be held accountable before Allah. He warned against acts of oppression and injustice.

Sermon Reference:

"O People, beware of Satan, for the safety of your religion. He has lost all hope that he will ever be able to lead you astray in big things, so beware of following him in small things."

This emphasis on justice and accountability mirrors modern legal principles where the rule of law is paramount and individuals are held accountable for their actions. The sermon encourages individuals to live

righteously, promote justice, and avoid oppression, which is the cornerstone of a harmonious and just society.

7- Religious Freedom and Responsibility:

Islam advocates for freedom of religion and rejects any form of coercion in matters of faith. The Farewell Sermon emphasized the importance of personal responsibility in religious observance.

Sermon Reference:

"O People, listen to me in earnest (serious), worship Allah, say your five daily prayers, fast during the month of Ramadan, and give your wealth in Zakat (charity). Perform Hajj if you can afford to".

This establishes the individual's responsibility to practice their faith and outlines key obligations without compulsion or force.

Conclusion:

The last sermon of the Prophet (PBUH) is a timeless document that promotes universal human rights, social justice, and equality. It laid down the foundation for a society based on fairness, respect for individual dignity, and protection from exploitation and injustice. The message of equality, the sanctity of life and property, women's rights, and economic justice resonate with modern

human rights frameworks and global efforts to establish just societies.

This sermon remains a fundamental guide for Muslims and non-Muslims alike, offering insights into how an ideal society should function, with justice and equality for all. The principles laid out by the Prophet (PBUH) continue to serve as a beacon of light for humanity in its quest for peace, fairness, and human dignity.