

Khutba / Greeting / Protocol

At the outset, we would like to congratulate all the nominees and winners of the awards this evening. When I saw the list of nominees, it was certainly a proud moment when I recognised Faisal Mkhize's name on the list. If I go back, 20 years, I recall us playing soccer in the dusty streets of Kwa-Mashu, and now we serve in financial services. And ours is the story of but one of the millions of lives that have been improved in just two decades. My colleague Ntlai has delved on the topic of transformation, and I would like to sustain this theme, and to underscore the essence of the Minara Chamber of Commerce.

The Minara Chamber of Commerce prides itself that its constitution and operations are based on an adherence to an Islamic Code of Conduct and Ethics as contained in the Holy Qur'an. One may then ask, how is this linked to this theme of transformation? And it is just this notion which we aim to remind ourselves of. God Almighty, Allah (SWT) says in the Holy Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً

*"Oh you believe, enter into Islam in entirety..."*

In another verse, God Almighty Allah (SWT) reiterates:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ءَامِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ءَ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ ءَ

*Oh you who believe, BELIEVE – In God and the Messenger (PBUH) and the book that was revealed to Him (PBUH)*

The reason we bring these verses to the fore, is that if we briefly survey the house of Islam globally, to a large extent, we have reduced it to its ritualistic component – prayer, charity, pilgrimage, Fast – so we must analyse this verse of the Qur'an where God Almighty asks us to enter into Islam in entirety. What is it's "entirety" under this theme of transformation? Our understanding of the concept of transformation, at the minimum, is to redress the inequalities effected upon marginalized communities through history.

Often, we picture Islam, or religion in general, as being a doctrinal path to asceticism. On the contrary, God Almighty reminds us in the Qur'an:

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ ءَ

*"Say to them (O Prophet), 'Who has forbidden the beautiful gifts of God, which He has produced for his servants..."*

Muhammad Umar Chapra encapsulated this concept so aptly when he said: "Virtue therefore lies not in shunning the bounties of God, but in enjoying them within the framework of the values of righteous living through which Islam seeks to promote human welfare."

Thus, according to Islam, action in every field of human activity, including the economic, is spiritual in nature – provided it is in harmony with the goals and values of Islam. It is these goals and values that determine the economic structure of Islam. Some of these goals:

- Economic well-being within the framework of the moral norms of Islam (which are the universally accepted moral norms)
- A universal brotherhood and justice
- Equitable distribution of income
- Freedom of the individual within the context of social welfare

Chapra continues so eloquently:

*“Islam goes further than this. It urges its adherents to gain mastery over nature because, according to the Qur’an,*

أَلَمْ تَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَأَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَهُ ظَاهِرَةً وَبَاطِنَةً

*“Do you not see that God has subjected to your use all things in the heaven and earth, and has made bounties flow to you in exceeding measure, both seen and unseen?”*

*From this, one cannot but infer that the goal of attaining a suitably high rate of economic growth should be among the economic goals of a Muslim society because this would be the manifestation of a continuous effort to use, through research and improvements in technology, the resources provided by God for the service and betterment of mankind, thus helping in the fulfilment of the very object of their creation.”*

Because God Almighty says:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ

*“You are the best of nations raised up for the benefit of mankind”*

Imam Ghazali emphasized that the very objective of the Shari’ah is to promote the welfare of the people which lies in safeguarding their faith, their life, their intellect, their posterity and their property, and that whatever ensures the safeguard of these five serves the public interest and is therefore desirable by the Shari’ah.

And so the short message that I leave you with this evening is that as the constitution of South Africa has been described as a transformative script, aimed at dismantling the structures that perpetuated inequality and injustice that led to the subjugation of majority of South Africa – economically and socially, we, as Muslims in South Africa, under this beautiful constitution that allows us the ability – legislatively – to be proudly Muslims, we have, by our constitution – the Qur’an – a responsibility given to us by Allah, as *Khaleefatullah fil Ardh*, to serve this public interest, continue the good work that we are doing in aiding the growth of this economy – as was showcased this evening – and help the transformative journey of South Africa to ensure the economic and social well-being of every citizen of this country, irrespective of race, creed or religion – because this is how the legacy of Muhammad (SAW) transformed the world.

...Adieu