

Language of the Friday Prayer

1. The Messenger ﷺ taught Special Manners for the Khateeb and the Audience

- 1) Abdullah ibn Salaam ؓ says "I heard the, blessed Messenger saying from the pulpit on Friday "you should have two pieces of garment for the Friday other than your working clothes" (Abu Dawud) Since Friday is the Eid of the week.
- 2) Hakim ibn Hazn says 201CI was present on a Friday with the Messenger, ﷺ he stood up and was leaning on a stick he praised the lord and glorified him with short, beautiful and blessed words. Then he ﷺ said "O people! You and neither capable of nor will do all the things you have been commanded to do. However, hold firmly the principle and give good news to all. (Abu Dawud)
- 3) Abdullah ibn Amr says the prophet ﷺ said " three kinds of people come to the Friday prayer: the one who talks and talks that is his share, the second one prays to God who will give him what he wills and hold back what he wills. And the third is the one who remains silent he neither steps over people nor hurts any one for him is forgiveness from Friday to Friday and three more days. (Abu Dawud)
- 4) Abdullah ibn Umar says: the prophet ﷺ said "whenever anyone of you is sleepy in the masjid on Friday he should change his place to become more alert" (Ahmed)

From these Ahadith following rules emerge:

- 1) Arrive early and occupy a place near the imam. The earlier you come the greater the merit.
- 2) Walking with dignity to Juma and avoid coming in the car, if one lives near the Masjid.
- 3) Continuously doing Dhikr on the way to the Masjid and once sitting there.
- 4) To sit wherever one finds a place and not to step over people in order to go to the front.

2. The messenger ﷺ made very Special Arrangements for the Khutba to be delivered from the pulpit

This section is translation from the famous commentary on Bukhari by ibn Hajar al Asquallani (d. 711AH) he is regarded as hafiz Ud-Dunya in science of Hadith.

In Bukhari there is a chapter called "Adhan on Friday" (ch.21) Ibn Hajar al Asquallani makes the following comment "the wisdom to have the Second Adhan is so that people know the Imam has sat on Pulpit so they can become silent for him when he gives the Khutba and Bilal used to do the Adhan at the door of the Masjid. The whole purpose of the Adhan is to call and inform everyone and that they should be quiet in front of the Imam" (Fath Al Bari Vol. 2: Pg. 457)

Another chapter in Kitab al Juma of Bukhari is "Khutba from the pulpit" (ch.26).

Jabir ibn Abdullah says "there was a trunk of palm tree in the masjid and the Prophet ﷺ used to lean on it when giving the Khutba. When the pulpit was built and put in the masjid we heard the tree trunk making a noise like a She-camel, until the Messenger ﷺ placed his blessed hand on it".

Ibn Hajar traces the history of the building of the pulpit. The crying noise from the tree trunk is known as the miracle of "Ustinaan Hannana" Showing that even a dead object had acquired emotions because the Messenger ﷺ had leaned against it when giving the Khutba. Ibn Hajar thinks that the first pulpit was made of brick with three steps. Later on it was made

from wood. During the Khilafat of Ameer Muawiya it was made taller with six steps as the congregation grew larger.

Commenting on the prophet's ﷺ khutba says "it used to be short and eloquent" (At-Taj al Juma al Usul Vol. 1 pg. 282)

3. The Messenger ﷺ reminded and taught Islam in the Khutba

These ahadith are from Sahih Muslim with commentary by one of the greatest scholars of Hadith Imam An Nawawi ﷺ (Vol: 2 Pg. 153)

- 1) Jabir ibn Sumra ﷺ reports "I used to pray with the Messenger ﷺ and his ﷺ prayer was of medium length so was his Khutba" (Muslim) Imam Nawawi interprets 'Qasdan' medium length as "being between too long and too short".
- 2) Jabir ibn Abdullah ﷺ said "when the beloved Messenger ﷺ gave the Khutba his eyes became red, his voice became louder and his anger stronger as though he was warning soldiers; your mornings and your evenings the time between me and the final hour is like this and he illustrated it with his index and middle fingers next to one another. He continued "the best words are the words of the book of god and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad rasulullah ﷺ and the worst things are innovations and every innovation is an error and I should be foremost in the sight of every believer more than himself and anyone who leaves behind him wealth that is for his family and whoever leaves behind any debt its payment is upon me". (Muslim)
- 3) Jabir ibn Abdullah ﷺ narrates " On Fridays the Messenger ﷺ used to give the Khutba standing up, one Friday a caravan arrived in Madina whilst He ﷺ was giving the Khutba. All the people left except twelve of us who remained seated. On this occasion the verse was revealed "And when they saw the trading and futile activities they went for it and deserted you, leaving you standing". (Muslim)
- 4) Jabir ibn Sumra says " the beloved prophet ﷺ would give one Khutba and then sit down for a short while and then give the second one in them he used to read the Qur'an and remind people" (Muslim)

Imam Nawawi ﷺ says that imam Shaffi' ﷺ concludes from this that warning people (waiz) and reading the Qur'an are conditions for Khutba. According to him the conditions for the Khutba are: Hamd (glorification), salutations upon the Messenger ﷺ, waiz, recitation of the Qur'an and prayer for the Muslim Ummah. Imam Nawawi says "Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik and Abu Yusuf think that for Khutba Hamd, Tasbih and Tahleel are enough" However Imam Nawawi comments "This is a weak viewpoint because that by itself cannot be called a Khutba – the purpose intended cannot be achieved by that. It is clearly against what is proven from the Prophet (saw)". (Vol. 2: Pg. 150)

Conclusion 1

The above three points make it clear that the Khutba is very special-it has a special place in Islamic liturgy and worship. So what is its objective that so many preparations are made for it? A special Adhan is said for drawing people's attention, the place from which it is to be done the pulpit is made very special and finally everyone is ordered to be silent and listen carefully. Why all this preparation?

Ibn Hajar ﷺ replies: "it is to warn the listeners and teach them some aspects of the religion". His concluding remarks are "And his saying he gave Khutba from the pulpit" the conclusion from it is that the Khateeb teaches the rulings of religion from the pulpit" (Fath ul Bari Vol. 2: pg. 465)

The opinion of Ala Hazrat Brailvi ﷺ about the Friday Khutba

Ala Hazrat Ahmed Raza Khan (d. 1921) was asked: “what do the scholars say about Zaid who reads the Khutba and (then translates it into Urdu). Consequently the Khutba is prolonged and the Friday prayer is delayed. Is this permissible? His reply was:

“Due to the Urdu translation the delay in the prayer is not a detachment or separation as such since the translation of the Khutba is also Khutba. Since what is in it is also in the Khutba that is reminder and waiz. Yes its true that the Khutba is prolonged and this is against Sunnah particularly if it is difficult for the worshippers.

If nothing else mixing Khutba with non-Arabic is Makruh and against the inherited Sunnah. However, in both Eids if people are happy one can do the Khutba in any language as long as it is with the intention of doing waiz and not giving Khutba. Since the Messenger used to go to the women’s group who were gathered there on Eid to give them a reminder (mishkat)”. (Fatwa Rizwiyya Vol. 8 pg. 287)

It is interesting to note that in this fatwa Ala Hazrat says that the Urdu Khutba is also Khutba and then says if the translation prolongs the Khutba and becomes difficult for the congregation then its Makruh. The question is what is the length of Khutba? In the days of the Khulafa the Khalifa himself would give the Khutba for two good reasons: firstly he would have delegated the teaching of Islam to his appointed Imam and there fore his Khutba was a mere ritual.

For example, Abu Huraira ﷺ used to teach Hadith after the first Adhan whilst Umar the Khalifa would then give the Khutba after second Adhan. (Mustadrik - hakim).

Tamim Darmi is another disciple who used to do this during the Khilafat of Umar and Uthman (Musnad Ahmad)

Secondly the facilities were always inadequate to house large congregations who often would be sitting outside. Particularly in summer how long could people sit out in the sun and listen to the Khateeb. This is a far cry from our air-conditioned and comfortable mosques today.

However, living as a Diaspora in the west both of these reasons are not applicable. Firstly the Imam is the Khateeb as well and has only this one opportunity in the week to teach his congregation. Can any responsible Khateeb who is interested in the Moral and spiritual development of his congregation ignore this opportunity? I don’t think so. It would be highly irresponsible. The rulers were not interested in giving long sermons their main interest was to use this opportunity to reinforce their authority and get public loyalty (this is why the Khateeb would hold a sword or stick in his left hand whilst giving the Khutba). Today none of this applies. We Muslims must overcome our nostalgia for past glory and get on with building and living peaceful and happy lives. Insha Allah.

Seeing the widespread ignorance in young Muslims is it responsible to waste this wonderful opportunity of teaching Islam? When they are attentive and ready to listen. The lack of knowledge and understanding of Islam is creating a generation of people who do not know how to perform even the basic rituals of Salah. Most young people get no opportunity to learn about their religion – the 15-20 minutes teachings during the Khutba can be very beneficial.

It is interesting to note that Ala Hazrat accepts the second Eid Khutba in any language other than Arabic as long as people are happy with that. So he does allow the use of English in Eid Khutba – is there any reason why this principle cannot be used in the Friday Khutba?

Ala Hazrat was asked: What do scholars of Islam say about reading Urdu religious poetry in the Friday Khutba. Is this allowed? The excuse being that public cannot understand Arabic. His Reply was: This is against the inherited way of Muslims (sunnat mutawarisa muslimeen) and therefore Makruh. Over the centuries Muslims have always given Khutba in Arabic – this has been the tradition and its necessary to follow the tradition. During the time of Disciple many countries were conquered but there is no report of Disciple giving Khutba in any other language besides Arabic. With regards to the permissibility of reading Urdu poetry in Khutba Ala Hazrat says “ Similarly if in the Arabic Khutba some Urdu poetry is read for purpose of waiz and education as is the habit all over India these days. This would be considered Khalaf-e-Ula and Makruh Tanzihee at most. There is no evidence to call it Makruh Tahrieme, sinful and forbidden or misleading innovation.”

Conclusion 2

Ala Hazrat regards use of Urdu poetry permissible in Friday Khutba and delivery of Eid Khutba in Urdu permissible although khalaf e ula (not preferred).

The language of Friday Khutba in Muslim Countries

The issue of using English language in the Friday Khutba has raised some controversy. It is good to see people challenging and refusing to follow blindly. I appreciate this; it shows people in the congregation are serious enough to ask questions. I hope that they will also study this matter conscientiously and will be willing to listen to others views as well. The Messenger (saw) taught us “my community will never agree on error”. Imam Ghazzali used this to prove the fact that when the vast majority of Ummah agrees on something it’s correct. Since the infallibility of the community is proven and its immunity from error.

Allama Zubaydi a commentator of Ihya Ulum Din writing about the formation of religious assembly on Friday says “with change in the circumstances of the listeners there can be change in the timing also. (Sharh-e Ihya ulum Din Vol. 3 pg. 277)

So the use of English as a means of teaching during the Friday Khutba is not an issue in reality. Since the Friday Khutba is one of the conditions for validity of the Friday prayer. According to all the source books of fiqh no one mentions Arabic as a requirement for the Khutba. For example The Great Hanafi Scholar Hassan Shurrumbulah (d; 1069AH) in his famous Nur-al Ezah lists eighteen Sunnah of Khutba. Arabic is not a requirement nor Sunnah. Infact the Great Imam Abu Hanafi said it explicitly that languages beside Arabic are allowed in Khutba.

Even if we accept that the use of Arabic in Khutba is a hukm of Shariah – a ruling of Shariah – the question is what kind of hukm is it? Is it Fardh, Wajib, Sunnah Muakkadah, Ghair Muakkadah or Mustahab? Even Ala Hazrat (d: 1921) refers to it as Sunna–Mutawarisa, inherited tradition. He also quotes a famous principle of fiqh which is “a ruling of Shariah (hukm) remains valid as long as it continues to fulfil its requirements. Its contravention is equivalent to ignoring it and that is considered Makruh.” (Fatawa Rizviyya Vol. 8 pg. 302)

We have proved above beyond doubt that the purpose of Khutba is teaching of the congregation. Is this purpose achieved best through Arabic or English? A simple Question! We must not forget that jurists’ decisions are ever changing and are not permanent for all ages and for all places. Professor Tariq Ramadhan eloquently makes this point, “Fiqh when well understood is a given answer made in a given moment of history, by jurist who “has made an effort” to formulate an Islamic legislation. We should salute such a job, but we do not have to sanctify the jurists’ decisions or propositions. The issue of resolving the problems

of modern life is one of the major problems facing the Muslims today. Often they either mistake the spirit of Quranic injunctions with the sense that such or such jurist had given to them in the first period of Islam, or find it very hard to think out a legislation which is drawn from the fundamental sources but which is at the same time really in tune with our time” (Islam, the west and the challenges of modernity pg. 17)

And then in fiqh there is the principle of *Istihsan*, a powerful tool for ensuring that Islamic practices remain dynamic and ever fresh. Professor Hashim Kamali explains this principle as follows:

Istihsan – Hanafi definition of Istihsan is:

“The principle which authorises departure from an established precedent in favour of a different ruling for a reason stronger than the one which is obtained in that precedent. Al-Sarakhasi adds that the precedent which is set aside by Istihsan normally consists of an established analogy which maybe abandoned in favour of a superior proof, that is the Quran, the Sunnah necessity or a stronger qiyas”.

Abu Zaharah says “Istihsan is to formulate a decision which sets aside an established analogy for a reason that justifies such a departure and seeks to uphold a higher value of the Shariah. Hadith “what the Muslims deem to be good is good in the sight of Allah”

Perhaps it is in light of these clear principles that the Muslims scholars worldwide are using native languages in Friday Khutba. Here is a list of countries where Friday Khutba is officially delivered in native languages:

- ❖ Indonesia – since 1945 (*ref. 1*)
- ❖ Malaysia (2)
- ❖ Iran (3)
- ❖ Turkey (4)
- ❖ The Arab countries: In all Arab countries Friday Khutba is delivered in local dialect known as “Amiyya” – this is colloquial Arabic that is considerably different from “Fusha” the classical Quranic and prophetic Arabic. Anyone who has travelled in the Arab world cannot fail to notice this. During my two years study at Al-Azhar I used to pray the Friday prayer in various Masjids and it was rarity to find a Khateeb who would deliver the Khutba in Fusha - it was mostly in Amiyya. If the sahaba were present they wouldn’t understand a word. A Libyan friend of mine Dr Nuri who comes from Tripoli tells me how difficult he finds the dialect of Libyans living in the South. (5)
- ❖ N. America: nearly the nearly six million Muslims (6)
- ❖ South Africa (6)

Final conclusion

Based on the above evidence it is clear that the delivery of Friday Khutba in the native language is the closest to the Sunna and the spirit of Islam. The fact that more than eighty percent of Muslims hear the Khutba in their native language is a testimony to the correctness of this way. However this in no way negates or contradicts those who wish to continue to use the three minute Arabic Khutba.

References.

- 1) *Personal communities; Prof. Aza musali state Islamic university, Jakarta*
- 2) *Personal communication: Muhammad Susawaili leader of Malaysian State University of Nottingham*
- 3) *Personal Communication: Dr Muhammad Saeed Bhamnpour: Director college of Advanced Islamic Studies (London)*

- 4) *Personal Communication: Dr Bebakir Cinar Director Carroll College Bradford.*
- 5) *Personal Communications (a) Dr M. Nuri, Headteacher Libyan School (Nottingham)*
(b) Mufti Abdur Rasool Mansoor Chief Imam Redditch Mosque
- 6) *Personal communications; Ghufran Shah based on travels in South Africa, America, Europe, Taiwan & India.*