

# ALI 525

## SESSION 3: CULTIVATING A VIRTUOUS CHARACTER

# Session 3 Outline

- ▶ Summary of Last Two Lectures
- ▶ The Structure of Societies
- ▶ The Foundation and Purpose of Islamic Societies
- ▶ The Foundation and Purpose of Modern Societies
- ▶ The Modern Assumptions of Reason, Freedom and Equality

# Summary of Previous Lectures

- ▶ Human beings have two basic natures, and the free-will to choose
- ▶ Our goal or higher nature is to “be” servants and representatives of God
- ▶ Outwardly = Follow God’s laws & act beautifully
- ▶ Inwardly = State of surrender & Reflect the Divine Names and Qualities
- ▶ Questions??

# The Structure of Societies

- ▶ Two different levels
- ▶ First level = Foundational Level
- ▶ Made up of underlying ideas and beliefs
- ▶ When you combine these underlying beliefs they create a way of seeing the world
- ▶ This is the ***foundational worldview***

# The Structure of Societies

- ▶ Second level = consequential level
- ▶ Made up of different practices and institutions
- ▶ Practices and institutions are the **consequence** of the foundational worldview
- ▶ The Example of a tree with hidden roots

# The Structure of Societies

*Seest thou not how Allah sets forth a parable? - A goodly word like a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach) to the heavens,- of its Lord. So Allah sets forth parables for men, in order that they may receive admonition. (14:24)*

▶ Questions??

# The Foundation of Islamic Societies

- ▶ The Ideas and Beliefs from the Quran and Sunnah
- ▶ Principal foundational worldview = Tawhid
- ▶ Absolute unity, balance & harmony
- ▶ Islamic Societies are filled with reminders of the Divine Presence and Divine Unity

# The Foundation of Islamic Societies

- ▶ Our surroundings impact our soul
- ▶ The purpose of an Islamic society
- ▶ Set up your surrounding to reflect Tawhid !
- ▶ Questions??

# The Foundation of Modern Societies

- ▶ Foundation formed between the 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries
- ▶ Reacting to Premodern Christianity and the Church
- ▶ Completely changed the way we see and understand ourselves
- ▶ Many foundational ideas but they can all be grouped under Humanism

# The Foundation of Modern Societies

- ▶ Humanism has three main characteristics:
- ▶ (1) Revolves around the idea of the individual, autonomous and rational human being
- ▶ (2) Believes that all truth is primarily known through reason and science
- ▶ (3) Believes that (1) and (2) can construct ethical societies without recourse to God, revelation or religion

# The Foundation of Modern Societies

- ▶ The ideas and beliefs (first level) resulted in different practices and institutions (second level)
- ▶ Problem: Once you remove God/Truth/Reality there is only the relative and changing
- ▶ Relative practices and institutions lead to multiplicity, division and disorder
- ▶ Tawhid vs Takthir
- ▶ Questions??

# Modern Assumptions: Reason, Freedom and Equality

- ▶ Hypothetical question to the atheist
- ▶ Situation of Muslims in the Modern world
- ▶ Questions are not asked in a vacuum !
- ▶ We need to understand the ideas behind modern and Islamic Societies

# Modern Assumptions: Reason, Freedom and Equality

- ▶ The Example of Reason
- ▶ Epistemology = the study of how we know things (knowledge)
- ▶ Rationalize Revelation

*To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety: so judge between them by what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that hath come to thee... (5:48)*

# Modern Assumptions: Reason, Freedom and Equality

- ▶ The example of freedom
- ▶ Primarily a outward act Vs primarily and inward virtue
- ▶ Freedom from the Ego

*Allah doth not wish to place you in a difficulty, but to make you clean, and to complete his favour to you, that ye may be grateful. (5:6)*

# Modern Assumptions: Reason, Freedom and Equality

- ▶ The example of Equality
- ▶ Inward understanding over outward understanding
- ▶ The Divine balance

*And the heaven He raised and imposed the balance. That you not transgress within the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance. (55:9-11)*

*Glorify the name of thy Guardian-Lord Most High. Who hath created and further given order and proportion (87:1-2)*

# Modern Assumptions: Reason, Freedom and Equality

- ▶ Inward Equality
- ▶ Outward synthesis, balance and harmony
- ▶ Human dispositions and talents
- ▶ Questions??

# Modern Assumptions: Reason, Freedom and Equality

▶ Thank You!!