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**Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura**  
**Friday Sermon**  
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**Islam and Culture**

أَحْمَدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي هَدَانَا لِهَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لِنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْلَا أَنْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ. أَشْهَدُ أَنْ  
لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ.  
اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ، وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ. أَمَّا بَعْدُ، فَيَا  
عِبَادَ اللَّهِ، اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ. قَالَ تَعَالَى فِي التَّنْزِيلِ: يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ  
حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ.

**Zumratal mukminin rahimakumullah,**

Let us have taqwa towards Allah s.w.t. with true consciousness.  
Obey all His commands and refrain from all His prohibitions.  
Align our way of life with His divine guidance. May Allah s.w.t.  
shower His blessings and mercy upon us all. Amin, ya Rabbal  
'Alamin.

**Beloved Friday congregation,**

What is the first thing that comes to mind when we speak about  
**culture**? And what role does **culture** play in the life of a Muslim?

Insya-Allah, today's sermon will discuss **culture** through the lens of Islam.

My dear brothers, **culture** refers to practices and norms that are passed down from generation to generation – whether in speech or in action – and are associated with a particular community or people. At times, there is an overlap between **cultural** practices and religious observance.

Today, there are more than two billion Muslims across the world. Naturally, our lives are shaped by diverse **cultures**. The question then arises: what is Islam's perspective on this?

**My dear brothers,**

Islam recognises the existence and diversity of **cultures**. In verse 13 of Surah Al-Hujurat, Allah s.w.t. explains that humanity was created into diverse nations and tribes so that we may come to know one another. **Culture** is therefore part of a community's identity, and it is something which we are encouraged to learn and understand.

As such, we should not hastily reject or change a **cultural** practice simply because it differs from our own norms. At the same time, we must not stubbornly defend **cultural** practices that clearly contradict the teachings of Islam. This is the balance that Islam calls us to uphold.

**Respected congregation,**

Indeed, the default ruling of **cultural** practices is permissibility, so long as they are in line with the guidance of the Shariah.

This is because Islam is not a **religion** that opposes **culture**. Rather, Islam refines and guides **culture** so that it aligns with the **values** of faith. In this regard, scholars have explained that the relationship between Islam and **culture** can be understood through several approaches:

**First, there are cultural practices that are recognised and reinforced by Islam.** Practices such as honouring guests, working together as a community, and extending help to those in need are deeply rooted in our **culture**. Islam affirms these practices, making them acts that are rewarded and encouraged. In fact, such practices are signs of a person's perfection of faith.

**Second, there are cultural practices that are guided and corrected by Islam.** For example, it was common in pre-Islamic Arabia to support one's family or tribe in disputes, regardless of whether they were right or wrong. The Prophet s.a.w. corrected this blind loyalty by introducing a framework rooted in justice – supporting one's brother entails stopping him from committing injustice, and by helping him when he is oppressed. This is derived from the hadith of the Prophet s.a.w., which means: *“Help your brother, whether he is an oppressor or oppressed.”* (Reported by al-Bukhari). This clearly shows that Islam reshapes inherited **culture** to align with justice and truth.

**Third, there are cultural practices that Islam dismisses**, as they contradict **religious values**. These include practices such as consuming intoxicants. Islam is firm in rejecting such practices as they erode moral character and harm society.

**Dear congregation,**

In a plural and cosmopolitan society, **cultural** differences can sometimes lead to differing views. Some may be quick to reject other **cultures** simply because they are different, while others may accept all forms of **culture** without any **religious** guidance.

Islam provides us with a balanced approach:

**First, cultural diversity should be seen as a strength**, not a flaw. Differences in society are meant to be appreciated, not erased. Not everything that is different is wrong. For instance, although many Muslims here are of Malay background, Malay customs should not be imposed on Muslims from different **cultures**. Mutual respect in **cultural** interactions is the foundation of a harmonious society.

**Second, good cultural practices should be guided by the values of faith.** Practices such as wearing modest attire, observing good manners, and maintaining strong family and community ties should be preserved. They must be guided by **religious** teachings so that they are not merely customs, but acts of worship that reflect our faith in Allah s.w.t.

**Third, we must be mindful and discerning in evaluating cultural practices.** Not all **cultural** practices must be preserved. At times, we must have the courage to leave practices that are not aligned with Islamic teachings. However, such change must be carried out with wisdom and in stages, as seen in the gradual prohibition of intoxicants in Islam.

In our society, there are still efforts to preserve certain practices that contradict Islam due to a lack of sound knowledge. Examples include some **cultural** practices such as *kuda kepang* which contain elements of superstition, or reliance on talismans and charms for protection. All these require careful reflection grounded by our faith and the conviction to make change with wisdom.

**Dear brothers and sisters,**

In conclusion, it is indeed our challenge today to approach and align both **culture** and **religion** with wisdom. However, it is something which we must strive towards. As a well-known Malay saying goes: *“Custom is grounded by the Shariah, and the Shariah is founded upon the Book of Allah.”* **Religion** serves as our guide, while **culture** serves as the vessel through which we live out noble **values** in our daily lives.

Let us strive to be a community that practices **culture** guided by faith. May we become a society that is harmonious,

knowledgeable, and wise in living out the teachings of Islam.  
Amin, ya Rabbal 'Alamin.

أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ الْعَظِيمَ لِي وَلَكُمْ، فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ  
الرَّحِيمُ.

## Second Sermon

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ حَمْدًا كَثِيرًا كَمَا أَمَرَ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدَهُ وَرَسُولَهُ. اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ. أَمَا بَعْدُ، فَيَا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ، اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ تَعَالَى فِيمَا أَمَرَ، وَانْتَهُوا عَمَّا نَهَى عَنْهُ وَزَجَرَ.

أَلَا صَلُّوا وَسَلِّمُوا عَلَى النَّبِيِّ الْمُصْطَفَى، فَقَدْ أَمَرَنَا اللَّهُ بِذَلِكَ حَيْثُ قَالَ فِي كِتَابِهِ الْعَزِيزِ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا. اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ وَبَارِكْ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ.

وَارِضَ اللَّهُمَّ عَنِ الْخُلَفَاءِ الرَّاشِدِينَ الْمُهَدِّينَ سَادَاتِنَا أَبِي بَكْرٍ وَعُمَرَ وَعُثْمَانَ وَعَلِيٍّ، وَعَنْ بَقِيَّةِ الصَّحَابَةِ وَالْقُرَابَةِ وَالتَّابِعِينَ، وَتَابِعِي التَّابِعِينَ، وَعَنَّا مَعَهُمْ وَفِيهِمْ بِرَحْمَتِكَ يَا رَحِيمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ.

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ، وَالْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ، الْأَحْيَاءِ مِنْهُمْ وَالْأَمْوَاتِ. اللَّهُمَّ ادْفَعْ عَنَّا الْبَلَاءَ وَالْوَبَاءَ وَالرُّلَازِلَ وَالْمِحْنَ، مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ، عَنِ بَلَدِنَا خَاصَّةً، وَسَائِرِ الْبُلْدَانِ عَامَّةً، يَا رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ. اللَّهُمَّ أَنْصُرْ إِخْوَانَنَا الْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ فِي عَزَّةٍ وَفِي فِلِسْطِينَ وَفِي كُلِّ مَكَانٍ عَامَّةً، يَا رَحِيمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ. اللَّهُمَّ بَدِّلْ خَوْفَهُمْ أَمْنًا، وَحُزْنَهُمْ فَرَحًا، وَهَمَّهُمْ فَرَجًا، يَا رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ. اللَّهُمَّ اكْتُبِ السَّلَامَ وَالسَّلَامَ وَالْأَمْنَ وَالْأَمَانَ لِلْعَالَمِ كُلِّهِ

وَلِلنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ. رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً، وَفِي الآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً، وَقِنَا عَذَابَ  
النَّارِ.

عِبَادَ اللَّهِ، إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَى، وَيَنْهَى عَنِ  
الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ، يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ، فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ الْعَظِيمَ  
يَذْكُرْكُمْ، وَاشْكُرُوهُ عَلَى نِعَمِهِ يَزِدْكُمْ، وَاسْأَلُوهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ يُعْطِكُمْ، وَلَا تَكْفُرْ  
اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ.