The Language of the Friday Khutbah

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PREFACE

In substantial number of mosques in different parts of USA and some other western countries the Khutbah of Friday is delivered in English or other local languages. My respected brother Dr. Muhammad Ismail Madani asked me to explain the correct Shari'ah position about the language of the Khutbah. Certain articles have appeared in Urdu for the purpose but the English knowing people cannot benefit from them, therefore, it was suggested by my learned brother that I should write an article in English. The present booklet is meant to fulfill this need and I hope that it will clarify doubts on the subject. I would request the readers to consider the points raised in this article with an impartial and unbiased approach because the matter relates to a very important Islamic mode of worship. May Allah guide us to the straight path according to His own pleasure.

Muhammad Taqi Usmani
The Language of the Friday Khutbah

It is one of the basic requirements of the Friday prayer that it should be preceded by a Khutbah (sermon) delivered by the Imam. It is Wajib (mandatory) for every Muslim to attend the Khutbah from the very beginning. Being a part of the Jumu‘ah prayer, it has some special rules and traits which distinguish it from the normal lectures given on other occasions. One of these special traits is that like the prayer (Salah) it is delivered in Arabic. All the Muslims have been delivering the Khutbah of Friday in no other language than Arabic, even where the audience does not understand its meaning. It was in the present century for the first time that the idea of delivering the Khutbah in other languages emerged in some Muslim societies where majority of the audience could not understand Arabic properly. The intention behind this change was that without letting the people understand its contents, the Khutbah can hardly be of a meaningful use for the general people who are addressed by it. Conversely, if Khutbah is delivered in a local language, a very useful
message can be conveyed through it every Friday and it can serve as an effective medium for educating people in a wide area of Islamic teachings.

Apparently, the argument seems to be very logical. That is why it has found currency in the countries far from the centres of deeper Islamic knowledge. But before we accept it on its face value, we should first examine it in the light of the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the practice of his companions and the juristic views adopted by different schools of Islamic jurisprudence.

It is true that Islam being a universal religion, does not want to restrict it to a particular race or language. The Holy Qur'an has mentioned in express terms:

We never sent a messenger but in the language of the nation he was sent to.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ was so keen to convey the Islamic message to all foreign nations in their own languages that he sent some of his companions, like Zayd ibn Harithah رضي الله عنه to Syria to learn the Hebrew and the Syriac languages, so that he may preach Islam to the nations who did not know Arabic.

But at the same time, we notice that while leaving a wide spectrum of education and preaching open to any language convenient for the purpose, Islam has specified some limited functions to be performed in Arabic only. For example, it is mandatory for every Muslim to perform his five times prayers (Salah) in Arabic. This rule applies to all non-Arabs also who cannot normally
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understand what they are reciting, rather, sometimes it is difficult for them to learn the exact pronunciation of the Arabic words used in the prayers. Likewise, Adhan is the call for attending the congregation of Salah. It is addressed to the local people. But it is made obligatory that it is pronounced in Arabic. Its translation into any other language is not acceptable. Similarly, while performing Hajj we are directed to read talbiyah (لبيك اللهم) in Arabic. The translation of these words cannot serve the purpose. While greeting each other, we are obligated to say "سلام عليكم" in the exact Arabic words. "Peace Upon You" an exact translation of "سلام عليكم" cannot fulfill the requirement of the recognized (masnoon) greeting even though the former expression is more comprehensible for an English knowing person than the latter. Similarly, while commencing an important work it is desirable to say "بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم". These specific Arabic words may be translated into English or any other language easily understood by the speaker and the addressee but it will always be preferable to recite the original Arabic words.

The emphasis on exact Arabic words in some such matters is not based on any bias in favour of the Arabic language, because Islam has always been proponent of inter-nationalism rather than nationalism. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has himself eradicated the prides based on race, colour and language. He announced in his landmark sermon of his last Hajj that:

لا فضل للعربي على عجمي
An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab.

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However, for being an internationally united ummah, the Muslim should have some common features, specially in the ways of their worship. The modes of worship which require some oral recitations have, therefore, been prescribed in a manner that all recitations are carried out in one common language, regardless of the linguistic affiliation of the recitors. Arabic has been selected for this purpose, because it is the language in which Qur'an was revealed and in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم addressed the human kind. The Holy Qur'an and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ have been taken as the basic resources from where the rules of Shari'ah are deduced. Both being in Arabic, it is always desirable that a Muslim acquaints himself with it to the best possible extent. To make Arabic a common medium of expression for all Muslims, at least in the ritual recitings, serves this purpose also. When a non-Arab Muslim performs prayer in Arabic five times a day, he automatically establishes a strong relationship with the Qur'anic language which makes him understand a number of the terms and phrases used in the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah.

In short, it is enjoined upon the Muslims in some modes of worship that their oral recitations must be in Arabic. Therefore, to resolve the issue of the language of Khutbah we will have to examine whether the Khutbah of Friday is a form of worship or it is an ordinary lecture meant only to educate people.

The following points may help knowing the correct position in this respect:
1. It is established by authentic resources that the *Khutbah* of Friday is a part of the prayer and stands for two *Rak'at* of prayer. Every day, other than Friday, the prayer of *zuhr* consist of four *Rak'ats*, while on Friday the number of *Rak'at* of the *Jumu'ah* prayer has been reduced to two, and the other two *Rak'ats* have been substituted by the *Khutbah*. Sayyidna Umar رضى الله عنه the second caliph of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم says:

إذا جعلت الخطبة موضع الركعتين، من فاته الخطبة صلى ا ربما

The *Khutbah* has been prescribed in lieu of two *rakats*. Whosoever fails to deliver *Khutbah* must pray four *rakat*.

2. The Holy Qur'an has named the *Khutbah* as *Dhikr* in the following verse:

يا أيها الذين آمنوا إذا نودوا للصلاة من يوم الجمعة

فاسعوا إلى ذكر الله وذرو البعه

"O! believers, when there is a call for *Salah* on Friday, rush for the *Dhikr* of Allah and leave trade. (al-Jumu'ah:9)

Here the word 'Dhikr' stands for the *Khutbah*, because after hearing the *Adhan*, the *Salah* (prayer) does not start immediately. What starts after *Adhan is Khutbah*. That is why the Holy Qur'an did not say, 'When there is a call for prayer, rush for the prayer", rather it has said, "when there is a call for prayer, rush for the *Dhikr* of Allah. It is for this reason that all the Muslim schools of jurists are unanimous on the point that it is necessary upon every Muslim to set out for the *Masjid* as soon as he hears the call and should reach the *Masjid* at a time when the *Khutbah* is yet to start, because hearing the full *Khutbah* is *wajib* (mandatory).
This is sufficient to prove that the Holy Qur'an has used the word 'Dhikr' for the Khutbah. Dhikr means 'recitation of the name of Allah' as against 'Tadhkir' which means 'giving advice', 'to educate' or 'to admonish'. This is a clear indication from the Holy Qur'an that the basic purpose of Khutbah is Dhikr and not the Tadhkir and that it is a part of the worship rather than being a normal lecture.

3. At another place, the Holy Qur'an has referred to the Khutbah of Friday as "the recitation of the Holy Qur'an". The Holy verse says:

وأذا قرأ القرآن فاستمعوا له واتصروا لعلكم ترحمون

"And when the Qur'an is recited before you, listen to it carefully and be silent, so that you receive mercy. (al-'Araf:204)

According to a large number of commentators the 'recitation of the Qur'an in this verse refers to the Khutbah delivered before the prayer of Jumu'ah. Here again the word of recitation is used for the Khutbah which indicates that it is very similar to the recitation of Qur'anic verses during performing prayers.

In a number of authentic ahadith also, the Khutbah of Friday has been referred to as Dhikr. For example in a hadith reported by Imam al-Bukhari the Holy Prophet صل الله عليه وسلم, while persuading Muslims to go to the Masjid on Friday at the earliest, has said:

فأذا خرج الإمام حضرت الملائكة يستمعون الذكر

"Because when the Imam comes out (to deliver Khutbah) the angels come to listen to the Dhikr. (Sahih al-Bukhari v.1, p. 121)

In another narration, the same principle has been established in the followig words:
Based on this particular characteristic of the Khutbah of Friday it is admittedly subject to certain rules which are not applicable to normal religious lectures. Some of these rules are the following:

(i) It is a mandatory requirement for a valid Khutbah on Friday to contain at least one verse from the Holy Qur'an without which the Khutbah is not valid, while in normal lectures no recitation from the Holy Qur'an is necessary.

(ii) Another mandatory rule is that it must contain some words in praise of Allah Almighty and for sending Salah (durood) to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم while no such requirement is mandatory in the case of normal lectures.

(iii) The Khutbah being a part of the prayer no one from the audience is allowed to utter a single word during Khutbah. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has emphasized on this principle in the following words:

"If you speak during Khutbah on Friday, you commit absurdity."

"Whoever says to his friend while Imam is delivering Khutbah on Friday, “keep quiet”"
commits absurdity."

It is obvious that the words 'keep quiet' do not disturb the *Khutbah*, nor do they stop one from hearing its contents. Rather, they may induce others to maintain silence. Still, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has forbidden to utter these words during the *Khutbah* of Friday. The reason is that the *Khutbah* of Friday enjoys the same status as the *Salah* itself. While offering *Salah*, one cannot even say, 'keep quiet' to stop someone from speaking. Similar rule has been applied to *Khutbah* also, which is another indication that the *Khutbah* of Friday is not like a normal lecture. It is a part of *Salah*, therefore, most of the rules applicable to *Salah* are also applicable to it.

4. The *Khutbah* has been held as a prerequisite for the Friday prayer. No Friday prayer is valid without a *Khutbah*. All the Muslim jurists are unanimous on this point. Had it been a normal lecture for the purpose of preaching, it would have nothing to do with the validity of the *Jumu‘ah* prayer.

5. It is admitted by all that the *Khutbah* must be delivered after the commencement of the prescribed time of *Jumu‘ah* prayer. If the *Khutbah* is delivered before the prescribed time it is not valid, even if the prayer is offered within the prescribed time. In this case, both the *Khutbah* and the prayer will have to be repeated. (al-Bahr al-Ra‘iq v. 2 p. 158)

If the purpose of the *Khutbah* is nothing but preaching or education, it should have been acceptable that the *Khutbah* is delivered before the time of
Jumu‘ah prayer and the prayer is offered after the commencement of the prescribed time. This strictness about the time of the Khutbah further confirms that it is a part of the Salah and is subject to the similar rules as rules provided for Salah.

6. If the Imam confines himself to the hamd (praising Allah) and Salah (Durood) for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and to reciting some verses from the Holy Qur‘an, and making some Du‘a (supplication) and does not utter a single word to preach or to educate people, the Khutbah is held to be valid and the Salah of Jumu‘ah can be offered after that. Had the purpose been to educate people, it would have been the main ingredient of the Khutbah to say at least a few words for this purpose without which it should not have been a valid Khutbah. But it has been held valid even without the words of preaching or educating. Sayyidna Uthman رضى الله عنهم delivered his first Khutbah (after he assumed the charge of Khilafat) exactly in this fashion and did not say a single word for the purpose of preaching. Still his Khutbah was held as valid. It was in the presence of the Sahabah رضى الله عنهم but no one from them challenged the validity of such a Khutbah.

This is again a clear proof of the fact that the basic purpose of the Khutbah is Dhikr and not Tadhkir. Being a part of the Jumu‘ah prayer, it is a form of worship and not basically a method of preaching and education.

All these points go a long way to prove that, unlike normal lectures or sermons, certain rules peculiar to Salah have been prescribed for the Khutbah of Jumu‘ah. It is in this context that it has been held necessary that
it should be delivered in Arabic only. Just as *Salah* cannot be performed in any language other than Arabic the *Khutbah* of *Jumu’ah* too, cannot be delivered in any other language. That is why the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم never tried to direct his companions to deliver the *Khutbah* in the local language where the audience could not understand Arabic. Even the audience of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم sometimes included non-Arabs, but he never tried to get his *Khutbah* translated by an interpreter like he did while he spoke to foreign delegations.

After the demise of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the noble companions conquered a vast area of the globe. Even in the days of Sayyidna Umar رضي الله عنه, the whole Persia and a major part of the Roman Empire was brought under the Muslim rule, and thousands of non-Arab people embraced Islam, so much so that the majority of the Muslims living in Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Egypt were non-Arbs. These new converts were in desperate need of being educated in their own language, so that they may acquire proper knowledge of the basic Islamic rules and principles. It was not the age of printing, publishing and modern audio-visual instruments, therefore, the only source of acquiring knowledge was the personal contact. Still, the companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم never thought about delivering the Friday - *Khutbah* in the local languages, nor did they ever arrange for an interpreter to get it translated simultaneously. One cannot argue that the *Sahabah* could not speak the local languages, because a large number of them was either non-Arab by origin, like Salman al-Farisi رضي الله عنه Suhayb al-Rumi, Bilal al-Habashi or has learnt the local languages, like Zayd bin Harithah رضي الله عنهم.
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It was universally accepted that, like the Salah and Adhan, the Khutbah of Friday must be delivered in Arabic, and it is not permissible to deliver it in any other language, even when the audience are not able to understand Arabic, because it is basically a form of Dhikr or worship, and not a source of education. If the audience understand Arabic, it can also serve a secondary purpose of educating them, but it is not the basic ingredient or the exclusive objective of Khutbah.

The Rulings of the recognized jurists:

This position is unanimously held by all the four schools of the Islamic jurisprudence. Their specific rulings are reproduced below:

Maliki School

The Maliki scholars are very specific in declaring this rule. Al-Dasuqi, the well-known Maliki jurist, writes:

وكونها عربية) أي ولو كان الجماعة عجمالا يعرفون العربية، فلو كان ليس فيهم من يحسن الالتباس بالخطبة العربية لم يلزمهم جمعة . (حاشية الدسوقي على الشرح الكبير 1378: 1)

"And it is a condition for the validity of Jumu'ah that the Khutbah is delivered in Arabic, even though the people are non-Arabs and do not know the Arabic language. Therefore, if there is nobody who can deliver Khutbah in Arabic properly, the prayer of Jumu'ah is not obligatory on them (in which case they will offer the zuhr prayer).

In Minah-al-jalil, another recognized book of Maliki jurisprudence, the principle has been mentioned in a greater detail:
Al-Hattab, the most quoted Maliki jurist, writes in this Jawahir-al-iklil:

So, if the Imam delivered the Khutbah after Salah, it is necessary that he performs Salah again immediately after the Khutbah, otherwise (if considerable time has passed after the Khutbah, both Khutbah and Salah should be performed again, because it is a condition for the validity of Jumu‘ah prayer that both the Khutbahs are followed immediately by Salah, and that both of them are delivered in Arabic, even though the people are non-Arabs who do not understand Arabic.

Al-Adawi, another Maliki jurist, mentions the principle in the following words:
It is necessary that the *Khutbah* is in Arabic. Therefore, the *Khutbah* delivered in any other language is void. If no one from the people knows Arabic, and the Imam knows it, the Jumu'ah is obligatory but if the Imam does not know Arabic, the obligation of Jumu'ah prayer is no more effective.

The same principle has been established by all the recognized books of Maliki jurisprudence.

**Shafi'i School**

Similar principle has been accepted by the Shafi'i jurists also. Al-Ramli is one of the famous Shafi'i jurists of the later days who has been relied upon by the Muftis of Shafi'i school. He writes:

And it is a condition (for the validity of *Khutbah*) that it is delivered in Arabic. This is to follow the way of the *sahabah* and their
decendants. And to learn Arabic (for the purpose of delivering Khutbah) is Fard al-Kifayah, therefore, it is sufficient that at least one man learns it... But if no one learns it, all of them will be sinful and their jumu'ah prayer will not be acceptable. Instead, they will have to perform zuhr prayer. However, if it is not at all possible (due to short time) that the Arabic is learnt, then it is permissible that the Imam delivers Khutbah in his own language, even though the people do not understand it... If somebody raises the question as to what purpose can be served by the Khutbah when it is not understood by the people, our answer would be that the purpose is served when the people merely know that the Khutbah is being delivered, because it is expressly mentioned that if the audience listen to the Khutbah and do not understand its meaning, it is still a valid Khutbah.

The same rulings are given in other recognized books of Shafi'i school also.

Hambali School

The Hambali school is no different from the mainstream of the Muslim scholars. They too, are of the belief that the Khutbah must be delivered in Arabic. However, they say that if nobody is found who can deliver it in Arabic, then in that case only the Khutbah may be delivered in some other language. But so far as there is a single person who can speak Arabic, it is necessary that he delivers it in Arabic, even though the audience do not understand its meanings. Al-Buhooti, the renowned jurist of the Hambali School, writes:
And the Khutbah is not valid if it is delivered in any language other than Arabic when somebody is able to deliver it in Arabic. It is like the recitation of the Holy Qur'an (in prayer) which cannot be done in a non-Arab language. However, the Khutbah in any other language is valid only if nobody can deliver it in Arabic. Nevertheless, the recitation of the Holy Qur'an (as a part of the Khutbah) is not valid except in Arabic. If somebody cannot recite in Arabic, it is obligatory on him to recite a Dhikr instead of a verse of the Holy Qur'an, like in Salah (the person who cannot recite the Qur'anic verses is required to make Dhikr.)

The same rules are also mentioned in other books of the Hambali school. (See for example: كتاب الفروع ابن منفع ١٦٣٢).

Hanafi School

The Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence also agrees with the former three schools in the principle that the Friday Khutbah should be delivered in Arabic and it is not permissible to deliver it in any other language. However, there is a slight difference of opinion about some details of this principle. Imam Abu Yousuf and Imam Muhammad, the two pupils of Imam Abu Hanifah are of the view that a non-Arabic Khutbah is not acceptable in the sense that it cannot fulfill the
requirement of *Jumu’ah* prayer, therefore, no *Jumu’ah* prayer can be offered after it. Rather, the *Khutbah* must be delivered again in Arabic without which the following *Jumu’ah* prayer will not be valid. However, if no one from the community is able to deliver an Arabic *Khutbah*, then only in that case a non-Arabic *Khutbah* may fulfill the requirement based on the doctrine of necessity. The view of Imam Abu Yousuf and Imam Muhammad, in this respect, is close to the views of Imam Shafii and Imam Ahmad bin Hambal.

Imam Abu Hanifah, on the other hand, says that although it is *Makrooh* (impermissible) to deliver *Khutbah* in a non-Arab language yet if someone violates this principle and delivers it in any other language, then the requirement of *Khutbah* will be held as fulfilled and the *Jumu’ah* prayer offered after it will be valid.

Some people misunderstood the position of Imam Abu Hanifah in this matter from two different angels:

Firstly, some writers claim that this view represents the earlier position of Imam Abu Hanifah and he had, later on, withdrawn from it and had concurred to the view of his two pupils.

This statement is not correct. In fact, there are two separate issues which should not be confused. One issue is whether or not the recitation of the Holy Qur’an in a non-Arabic language is acceptable. It is with regard to this issue that Imam Abu Hanifah had an earlier view which accepted the recitation even in a non-Arab language, but later on, he recalled this view and concurred with the view of his two pupils and all other jurists who do not hold any recitation of Qur’an during *Salah* as valid unless it is in the original Arabic
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language. It is now settled with consensus and Imam Abu Hanifah does no longer differ from this unanimous position of the Muslim jurists.

The second issue relates to the Khutbah of Friday and to some other Adhkar of Salah etc. This issue is still a matter of difference between Imam Abu Hanifah and other jurists including Imam Abu Yousuf and Imam Muhammad who are of the view that the Khutbah in a non-Arabic language is not at all acceptable, and no Jumu‘ah prayer is valid after such a Khutbah, while Imam Abu Hanifah says that, despite being Makrooh, a non-Arabic Khutbah is recognized to the extent that it validates the Jumu‘ah prayer performed after it. This view of Imam Abu Hanifah still holds good and he did never resile from it.

The second misconception with regard to the position of Imam Abu Hanifah in the issue of Khutbah is that some people have misinterpreted his view to say that a non-Arabic Khutbah is quite permissible according to Imam Abu Hanifah.

This is again a wrong statement. Imam Abu Hanifah does not hold it quite permissible to deliver Khutbah in a non-Arabic language. He holds it "Makrooh Tahreeman", a term almost analogous to 'impermissible', which means that it is not allowed to deliver Khutbah in a language other than Arabic. However, if somebody commits this Makrooh (impermissible) act, his Khutbah will not be deemed as void, and the Jumu‘ah prayer performed after it will be valid.

To properly understand his position, one must recall that the Khutbah is a condition precedent to the validity of Jumu‘ah prayer. Without Khutbah, Jumu‘ah prayer is
void. Now most of the jurists, including Imam Abu Yousuf and Imam Muhammad are of the opinion that a non-Arabic Khutbah is not acceptable at all. If somebody delivers it non-Arabic language it can never be held as a Khutbah of Friday, therefore, it will not fulfill the condition of Jumu‘ah prayer and no Jumu‘ah prayer can be performed after it unless an Arabic Khutbah is delivered again.

Imam Abu Hanifah differs from them in this aspect only. He says that admittedly, a non-Arabic Khutbah is Makrooh or impermissible, yet the non-Arabic language does not render it as void. Therefore, it can be used for fulfilling the condition of the Jumu‘ah prayer. Therefore, the people who attend such a Khutbah can participate in the Jumu‘ah prayer and the obligation of Jumu‘ah will be held as discharged.

It is thus evident that all the four recognized schools of Islamic Fiqh are unanimous on the point that the Khutbah must be delivered in Arabic. The Maliki jurists have gone to the extent that if no Arabic-knowing person is available for delivering Khutbah, the Jumu‘ah is converted into Zuhr prayer. The Shafii jurists say that in this case the Muslims are under an obligation to appoint someone to learn as much Arabic words as may be sufficient to articulate a shortest possible Khutbah. However, if the time is too short to learn, then the Khutbah may be delivered in any other possible language. Similar is the view of the Hanbali jurists who insist that in this case the Imam may confine himself to the short words of Dhikr like القدّار الهمذاني للسيد الله ﷺ. This being allowed, he need not resort to delivering Khutbah in any other language.
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This analysis would show that the exceptions conceded by the Shafii or Hanbali schools relate to the rare situation where nobody is able to utter a few words in Arabic. This situation is similar to a situation where a person embraces Islam and does not find time to learn the basic ingredients of Salah in which case he is allowed to utter a few words of Dhikr in whatever manner he can. Obviously, the rule governing this rare phenomenon cannot be applied to the normal situations where Khutbah can be delivered in Arabic.

It must be noted here that all those who have allowed some exceptions to the general rule have done so only when a capable person to deliver Arabic Khutbah is not available. But no jurist has ever allowed such a concession to a situation where such a capable person is available but the audience do not understand Arabic. Conversely, each one of them has clearly mentioned that the rule will remain effective even when the audience do not understand the meaning of Khutbah.

It should be remembered that all these juristic rulings were given at a time when Islam had spread all over the world, and the Muslim community was not confined to the Arabian Peninsula; rather Millions of the Muslims belonged to non-Arab countries who did not know Arabic. In the beginning of the Islamic history even Syria, Iraq, Egypt and other Northern countries of Africa were non-Arabs. Their residents did not know Arabic. Moreover, Iran, India, Turkey, China and all the Eastern Muslim countries are still non-Arabs and very few of their residents know Arabic. The need for their Islamic education was too obvious to be doubted. The Muslim leaders spared no effort to fulfill this need, but nobody has suggested to change the language of
Khutbah to use it as a source of education. Evidently, the jurists quoted above were not unaware of the need to educate the common people, nor were they heedless to the basic requirements of the community. Still, their consistent practice throughout centuries was that the Khutbah of Jumu‘ah was always delivered in Arabic. No one from the non-Arab audience has ever raised objection against it, nor did the leaders of the Muslim thought ever try to change its language. They knew that there are many other occasions to deliver lectures in the local language to educate people, but the Khutbah of Friday, like Salah, has some peculiar characteristics, which should not be disturbed.

In order to benefit from the congregation of Friday and to use this occasion for educating common people, the non-Arab Muslim communities started a lecture in the local language before the second Adhan or after the Jumu‘ah prayer. For centuries the Muslims in India, Pakistan, China and the countries of Central Asia arrange for a general lecture in the local language before the second Adhan of Jumu‘ah. But after the second Adhan the arabic Khutbah is delivered followed by the Jumu‘ah prayer. In some places, the lecture in the local language is arranged after the Jumu‘ah prayer is over. Through this practice, the non-Arab Muslims have on the one hand, preserved the distinct characteristics of the Khutbah and maintained the consistent practice of the Ummah and on the other hand, they have availed of this opportunity for educating the common people also.

Some people raise two objections against this practice. First, with regard to its acceptability from the Shari‘ah point of view, and second, with reference to its practical aspect. The first objection is that the lecture in
the local language is an addition to the recognized components of the Jumu'ah congregation. It is tantamount to raising the number of Khutbah from two to three. According to them, this kind of addition should be regarded as 'bidah' (an innovation) because it has no precedent in the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or his noble companions. This objection, however, is not valid for two reasons:

Firstly, it is not correct to term every new practice as 'bidah'. In fact, a new practice becomes 'bidah' only when it is taken to be a part of the ritual practices, or is held to be wajib (obligatory) or masnoon (a practice prescribed by the Holy Prophet ﷺ). If a new practice is adopted simply for the sake of convenience and neither it is held as obligatory, nor masnoon, and nobody is compelled to follow it, nor a person is blamed for avoiding it, rather it is taken to be mubah (permissible), then such a practice cannot be held as 'bidah'. For example building of minarets or domes over the mosque is a new practice which did not exist in the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but it has never been termed as 'bidah' for the simple reason that this practice is not taken to be wajib or masnoon. Nobody has ever thought that it is necessary for a mosque to have minarets and domes, or that a mosque without domes and minarets is not a masjid. This practice has been adopted for the sake of convenience only, therefore, it is not a bidah or a prohibited innovation in religion. Similarly, a lecture before the second Adhan of Jumu'ah, in whatever language it may be, is not a bidah, because nobody deems it a part of the Jumu'ah prayer, nor is it held to be wajib or masnoon. It has been adopted for the sake of convenience and no one is compelled to deliver it,
nor to attend it. If no such lecture is delivered, nobody believes that the Jumu‘ah congregation is deficient or incomplete. Therefore, this additional lecture cannot be held as bid‘ah, even though it is presumed that it is a new practice adopted by the Muslims of later days.

Secondly, it is not correct to assume that this additional lecture has no precedent in the earlier days of the Islamic history. In fact, it is reported by several authentic sources that Sayyidna Umar had permitted Sayyidna Tamim al-Dari to give a lecture sermon in the masjid before Sayyidna Umar (رضي الله عنه) comes out to deliver the Khutbah of Friday. This practice of Sayyidna Umar (رضي الله عنه) reveals two points; firstly, that such an additional lecture is permissible, and secondly that this additional lecture is meant exclusively to educate people, while the formal Friday Khutbah has other elements, otherwise it was needless to have an additional lecture for education while both were in Arabic.

The second objection against this practice is that it is not feasible, specially in the countries where Friday is not observed as a weekly holiday. In such countries the people come to attend the Jumu‘ah prayer from their working places and have to go back to their work in a shortest possible time. Therefore, it is difficult for them to attend an additional lecture before the Khutbah.

But this difficulty can easily be resolved by shortening the Arabic Khutbah and by using the time so saved for the lecture in the local language. I have seen that a almost in every mosque in India, Pakistan, China, South Africa and in a large number of the mosques in UK, USA and Canada, both the Khutbah and a
preceding lecture are easily combined within the time officially allowed for the *Jumu'ah* prayer and it has created no difficulty at all. The only requirement for this practice is that the speaker of the additional lecture remains to-the-point, which is advisable otherwise also.

It is sometimes argued that even if the *Khutbah* is delivered in a local language, it is always started by some Arabic words containing *Hamd* (praise to Allah *Subhanahu*) and *Salah* (prayer to Allah's blessing) for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and at least one verse from the Holy Qur'an. This much is enough for fulfilling the necessary requirements of a valid Arabic *Khutbah*. After this necessary requirements, the rest of the *Khutbah* may be delivered in any language.

But this argument overlooks the point that it is a *Sunnah* that the Arabic *Khutbah* is followed by the *Jumu'ah* prayer immediately without considerable gap between the two. Therefore, this practice, too, is not in harmony with the *masnoon* way of delivering a *Khutbah*.

Our brothers who insist that the Friday-*Khutbah* must be delivered in a local language are requested to consider the following points in the light of the foregoing discussion:

1. The consistent practice of the *Ummah* throughout centuries has been to deliver the Friday-*Khutbah* in Arabic even in the non-Arab countries. Why should the contemporary Muslims deviate from the consistent practice?

2. *Khutbah* is a part of the *Jumu'ah* prayer, hence a mode of worship. The modes of worship are not open to our rational opinion. They have certain prescribed forms
which must permanent act and should never be changed through our rational arguments. Once this door is opened in one form of worship, there is no reason why other forms are not subjected to similar changes. The Argument in favour of an Urdu or English Khutbah may open the door for an Urdu or English Adhan and Salah also on the same analogy. The ways of worship are meant for creating a sense of obedience and submission. A Muslim is supposed to perform these acts as an obedient slave of Allah, without questioning the rationality of these acts, otherwise throwing stones on the Jamarat of Mina or rushing across Safa and Marwah are all apparently irrational acts; but, being the slaves of Allah, we have to perform these acts as modes of worship. This is exactly what the word 'Ibadah' means. Any alteration in these ways on the basis of one's opinion is contrary to the very sense and philosophy of 'Ibadah' or worship.

3. All the recognized schools of Islamic jurisprudence are unanimous on the point that delivering Friday-Khutbah in Arabic is obligatory. Most of the jurists have gone to the extent that in case the Khutbah is delivered in any other language, no Jumu‘ah prayer offered after it is valid. Some others (like Imam Abu Hanifah) hold the non-Arabic Khutbah as valid in the sense that the Jumu‘ah prayers offered after it is not void, yet at the same time they hold this practice to be impermissible, which means that the impermissibility of a non-Arabic Khutbah is a point of consensus between all the recognized schools of Islamic Fiqh.

A deviation from such a consensus can hardly render a service to the Muslim community except to create differences and disputes between them. It may be seen
that practically, this deviation has divided Muslims and their mosques into two groups. Even if it is accepted for the sake of argument that the non-Arabic Khutbah is permissible, it is at the most permissible and not obligatory, and if a permissible act may cause disunity among the Muslims, the greater interest of the Muslim Ummah requires that it should be abandoned. The Holy Prophet ﷺ dropped the idea of rebuilding the kabah on Abrahamic foundation merely because it might have created disputes, even though the proposed construction of the kabah was not only permissible, but also advisable. If such a pious act may be avoided for the sake of unity, the newly invented custom of delivering Khutbah in a non-Arabic language deserves all the more to be avoided for maintaining unity.

4. Those who believe that the Khutbah may be delivered in a non-Arabic language do not believe that the Arabic Khutbah is not permissible, while the followers of the four recognized schools of Islamic Fiqh believe that a non-Arabic Khutbah is not permissible. It means that an Arabic Khutbah is permissible according to all, while a non-Arabic Khutbah is not permissible according to the majority of the Muslims in the world. Obviously, in such a situation, the preferable practice would be the one which is permissible according to all the Muslims, so that every individual may be satisfied that he is performing the required worship in a permissible manner.

Instead of making it a matter of prestige we should mould our ways in accordance with the interest of the Ummah as a whole. May Allah grant us Taufiq to act according to His pleasure.
Although there is no specific Khutbah prescribed by the Shari’ah, however, for the sake of convenience, one Khutbah, abridged from the Khutbah of Maulana Muhammad Isma’il Shaheed is given here just for an example. The second Khutbah is taken from the Khutbat compiled by Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanavi.

الخطبة الأولى

الحمد لله علی الکَّتیب الظواهر الصفات سیمی
السمات كثیر الشان، جیثل القدر رفیع الذکر
مطاع الأمر جلی الیسران، علیم السری عرین الیسی
واسیع الجمل، كثير الغفران، جميل النیا، جیثی
العطا مجبی الدکا، عمیم الاحسان، سریع
المصاح بسید الیسی، أليف المدعی عزیز
السلطان، وتشهدان لا إله إلا الله وحده
لا شريك له، في الخلق والأمر، وتشهد أن سیدنا
ومؤلتان محتدًا عبده ورسوله المبعوث إلى الأسود
والآخیر المنقوط بشرح الصدر ورفیع الیسی
وصلی الله علیه وتعالیه، وآله وآلهائه الذين هم
خلاء العربية المبارکة، وحیبر الخالق تبعد الأنبیاء
أما بعد فيبا أيتها الناس، وجدوا لله فإن التوحید
رأس الطاعات، وأنفوا لله فإن النفوذ مبلاک
المستنیات، وعليكم بالسماة فإن السماة تهذی
إلى الاطاعة، ومن أطاع الله ورسوله فقد رشد.
واهتدوا وإياكم وأيامكم والبدعة فإن البدعة تنديد إلى الموعودة ومن يغيص الله ورسوله فقد صلى وغوى وعليكم بالصدق فإن الصدق ينجي والكذب يعذب وعليكم بالحسن فإن الله يحب المستعينين أعوذ بالله من الشيطان الزجيم وقال ربك ادعوني أستجيب لكم إن الذين يبسطون عون عبادتي سيدخلون جهنم داخرين بارك الله لنا ولكم في القرآن العظيم ونفعتنا ويناكم بالآيات والذكر المكريم استغفر الله إنه هو الغفور الزجيم

الخطبة الثانية

أحمده الله وسبعه وأستغفره ونعوذ بالله من شرور أنفسنا من يهدي الله فلا مصل له ومن يضل فلا هادي له وأشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له وأشهد محمد عبده ورسوله أرسله بالحق لبشيراً وناذراً كذيراً بين يدي الساعة من بني إسرائيل ورسوله فقد رشد ومن يعصهما فإنه لا يضر إلا نفسه ولا يضر الله شيئًا أعوذ بالله من الشيطان الزجيم إن الله وملكيته يضللون على النّبي إياها الذين امتنعوا صلوا عليه وسلموا

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تَسْلِيمًا ﷺ أَلِهِمُ صَلِّي عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ ﺍِبْنَكَ وَرَسُولُكَ
وَصَلِّ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْمُسْلِمِينَ
وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَبَارَكُ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلهِه وَذُرِّينِهِ
قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَرْحَمْ أَمْيَاتِ بَاِثِيَنَّ
أَبْوَيْكَ وَأَشْدَدْهُمْ فِي أَمْرِ اللَّهِ عُمَّرَ وَاَسْتَدَفْهُمْ كُبْرِاءَ
عِنْصُرَانِ وَأَقْصَاهُمْ عَلَى وَفَاطِمَةِ سَيِّدَةَ نَسَاءِ أُهْلِ
الْجَنَّةِ وَالْحَسَنِينَ وَالْخَسَنِينَ سَيِّدَةَ سِبَّابَ أُهْلِ
الْجَنَّةِ وَحُمْرَةَ أَسْدَادَ اللَّهِ وَأَسْدٌ رَسُولُهُ ﷺ أَلِهِمُ اِغْفِرْ
لِلَّعَابَاتِ وَوَلَدَهُ مُغَفِّرَةً طَائِحَةً وَبَاطِنَةً لَّا يَنْتَغِدُرُ دُنْبًا ﷺ أَلِهِ
اللَّهُ فِيّ أُصْحَابِي لَا يَنْتَجِرُونَهُ غَرْضًا يَنْبُدِدُ
فَمَن أَحْبَاهُمْ فِي حُبِّهِ اِخْتِبَاهُمْ وَمَنْ أَجُضَّهُمْ فِي جَغْضُهُ
أَجَضُّهُمْ ﷺ وَخَيَّرَ أَمْيَاتِ قَرْنِيَّ مِنْذِ اللَّهِ يُلْقُنَّهُمُ ﷺ
الذَّيْنِ يُلْقُنَّهُمُ ﷺ وَالسُّلَّطَانُ عَلَى اللَّهِ فِي الأَرْضِ
مِنْ أَهَمِّ سُلَّطَانِ اللَّهِ فِي الأَرْضِ أُهْلُهُ اللَّهُ ﷺ ﻧُوْلِهِ
اللَّهُ بَأَمِرٍ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحسَانِ وَإِنْبَاذُهُ ذِى الْقَرْنِي
وَبَيْنِي عَنْ النَّفْخَةِ وَالْمَكْرِ وَالْبَعْطُ، يَعْظُمُ
لَعْلَمَكَ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﷺ فَأَذَكَّرُونَ أَذَكَّرُكُمْ وَأَشْكُرُوْا
وَلَا تُكْفُّرُونَ ﷺ