

# Friday Sermon: Approach Not Foul Deeds

August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013

Last Friday sermon was based on Divine commandments as cited in verses 152 – 154 of Surah Al An'am. Only the first three commandments, i.e. avoiding Shirk, kind treatment of parents and significance of good upbringing of children by parents were elucidated. Today the other commandments about which God states: '**...what your Lord has made inviolable for you...**' were explained.

The fourth commandment in the verses is: '**...that you approach not foul deeds, whether open or secret...**' This commandment forbids different indecencies and foul acts. The [Arabic] word 'Fawahish' has several meanings. It means fornication, exceeding in wrongness, an immoral act, various big sins and satanic deeds, saying and doing everything that is bad and as well as being very miserly. This commandment eradicates personal and societal evils and gives resolution for matters that spread evil in homes and society.

With reference to fornication, elsewhere in the Qur'an there is a specific punishment. If a married person is embroiled in it, he forgets the rights of his family and overlooks them and a woman embroiled in it also does not fulfil the rights of her husband and children. If the person is unmarried then he is guilty of spreading foulness and indecency in society. People forge relationships by making false promises and if due to family pressure, or pressure of society or indeed due to their own false promises, the relationship breaks down, men do not suffer so much. Particularly our Asian culture covers up for men but a woman's life is ruined. Such instances are commonly reported in newspapers. If children are born of such relationships, they are deprived of their rights and their parents become guilty of 'killing' their children. Here, in these countries, there are some legal safeguards for such children but there are many people who practically kill their children, whereas such children have no rights in underdeveloped countries. There, if the rich commit such foul acts, they are above the law. It was in the Pakistani news just a couple of days ago that a woman had an illegitimate child and perversely the police filed a case against the poor woman and nothing was said to the man because he had a social standing. It is the odd case that is reported, who is to know how many incidents of such nature take place and how many families are destroyed. This is due to being distant from God's commandments. When this is the condition of Muslims, how can we censure the others! Indeed God commands not to even go near foul deeds.

In this age many different means of foulness can be found. There is the internet with indecent web-sites, lewd films on TV and offensive, pornographic magazines. Voices have started being raised here now that such offensive publications should not be displayed openly in shops and stalls as it has an adverse effect on children's morality. They have realised this today while the Qur'an gave the teaching 1400 years ago to stay away from indecency, it makes one immoral, distant one from God and from religion and even makes one break the law. Islam does not only forbid obvious and apparent foulness but also hidden immorality. The directive of Purdah and wearing modest clothes are a safeguard against open and informal connection between men and women.

Islam does not state as the Bible does that do not look at women with bad intent. In fact, it states that your eyes will fall on women in close environment and it will create immodesty and you will not be able to distinguish between good and bad. According to God and His Messenger in such open mixing of man and woman the third party is Satan. The internet was just mentioned. Chats on Facebook and Skype are included in this and Hazrat Khalifatul Masih has seen many families break up because of this. He said he greatly regretted that such incidents are found in our Ahmadi homes. Whereas the commandment is not to even approach such foulness because Satan takes hold of one.

The beautiful teaching of the Qur'an commands both men and women to restrain their eyes, this indeed curtails open mixing as well as watching lewd films. The commandment also includes not to socialise with people who pursue such interests in the name of freedom, who relate their stories and try and incite others to their ways. Men and women should not chat on Skype and Facebook and look at each other and should not make these a means of connecting with each other. God states that these are all open and hidden foul things and they result in one getting carried away by emotions, losing one's sense and eventually incurring God's displeasure.

In this day and age another foul matter is being promoted which is not only against nature but a nation was once destroyed because of it. Governments are in the process of legalising same-sex marriages, that is, plans are being made on governmental level to spread something foul and immoral. Some prime ministers are saying such laws should be followed across the globe. A [Christian] priest, probably from South Africa, who obviously follows the Bible which states that a nation was destroyed because of homosexuality, has said that if same-sex married couples cannot go to Heaven, then he would prefer to go to Hell. Such is the extent of immorality in the world today, if it continues to spread like this, then these nations will witness their ending. It will make their life in this world hellish and God knows what treatment they will have in the Hereafter. Medical research has clearly proven that AIDS is fast spreading among homosexual people. God's punishment comes in varied forms. It is not necessary that the Divine punishment of stones from the sky will be repeated. HIV takes a person to a dreadful and excruciating end.

The faster immorality is spreading the greater should be an Ahmadi's efforts to connect to God and try and save himself and the world from its destruction. Worldly people are appeasing a certain section of society for political gains, and promoting something which is against the commandments of God, and wish to spread it in the entire world which will result in destruction. Out of sympathy for them, we should inform them that God is Ever Merciful, He has kept the door of forgiveness open. He states: **'And those who, when they commit a foul deed or wrong themselves, remember Allah and implore forgiveness for their sins — and who can forgive sins except Allah?' (3:136)**. God forgives if there is no persistency in all foul deeds and one has fear of God. We need to protect ourselves against all immoralities and also try and show the ways to do so to others.

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said: 'Their God will forgive those who whenever they commit a foul deed or wrong their souls, they remember Allah the Exalted and seek forgiveness for their sin and do not persist in their sin.'

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih prayed that may everyone who is embroiled in foul deeds comes to their senses and is saved from God's chastisement. He said he had explained this matter because he had felt a great need for it as this matter has become very common.

The next commandment is: '**...you kill not the life which Allah has made sacred, save by right...**' This directive draws our attention to pay the dues of society, to pay the dues of our brothers, friends and associates with fairness and justice. Killing here does not only connote taking the life of another. In fact, to break connections with someone, to usurp the rights of another, to emotionally injure another, to humiliate another as if practically killing them, to destroy their self-respect is also 'killing'. And then there is spiritual killing. God has deemed that these are all tantamount to killing and He has forbidden them. Each killing ultimately results in discord and unrest in society and God strongly dislikes this. The statement: '**...save by right...**' does not give the right to take the law in one's hand and the punishment should be limited to only what is necessary so that reformation may take place. It should be clear here that everyone does not have the right to punish and to retaliate. This should be handled by the law and law should pass judgement according to the requisites of justice. Indeed, man-made laws are fairly recent whereas God had decreed this a long time ago. Death penalty and other various punishments are all given by and through law.

Killing also connotes the process of boycott. Only responsible organisations have a right to ex-communicate, boycott someone. Disciplinary procedures exist in our Jama'at also and these are for reformation purposes and not as a mark of cruelty. All restrictions are for the sake of reforming individuals, otherwise undue cruelty is also tantamount to killing. When judgment is passed by organisations in conflicts between two parties, obviously one party is deemed guilty. Sometimes, the other party, which has suffered loss etc. is unhappy with the level of the judgement and wants the judgement to be exactly as they wish it to be. If the contending parties are given the right to pass judgement one killing would follow another and the Qur'an commands against this. The real objective is to make people realise their mistake and reform.

The next commandment is in the following verse and it is: '**And approach not the property of the orphan, except in a way which is best...**' This directive draws our attention to the most vulnerable part of society; the orphans. The Property of orphans should be looked after in such a way so as not to incur loss but to make it beneficial. It should be used or invested as a trust. It should be looked after by the Jama'at, by the society and indeed by the law of the land. Property of orphans who have not reached an age of understanding should be invested in a way that enhances and increases it. It is a huge responsibility put on relatives and society as a whole. There is great admonishment regarding this responsibility. The Qur'an states: '**Surely, they who devour the property of orphans unjustly, only swallow fire into their bellies, and they shall burn in a blazing fire.**' (4:11) Quranic commandments do not give rights to one party while usurping the rights of the other, therefore it is also stated that while looking after the property of orphans it is all right to spend some of it while meeting all the requisites of fairness. It is allowed to spend from an orphan's property on his education and upbringing, but it is also stressed not to exceed limits in this regard. Those who are well-off may not take anything from an orphan's property while he is in their care. Good, sound investment of an orphan's property should always be in view. It is then stated: '**... till he attains his maturity...**' That is, return his property to him at this stage. Sometimes an orphan will not have attained enough maturity upon entering adulthood, in this case his property

should be continually looked after until he attains maturity. And if he has learning disability, then the property should be looked after on a permanent basis. If an orphan with learning disability gets married and has children, his property should be looked after until his children reach adulthood.

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) wrote: ‘That is, should there be among you a person of property who is an orphan or minor and it is apprehended that he would waste his property through his lack of sense, you should take charge of his property as a custodian and should not hand it over to him, inasmuch as the whole system of commerce and social security depends upon proper care of property. Out of the income of the property you should provide for the maintenance of its owner and you should instruct him in all equitable values that would help to develop his reason and understanding and would furnish him with proper training so that he should not remain ignorant and inexperienced. If he is the son of a merchant he may be instructed in the ways of business and commerce, and if his father followed some profession or other occupation he may be given training in some appropriate occupation. Test him from time to time whether he is making progress in his training. When he arrives at the age of maturity, that is to say about 18 years, and you perceive that he has developed enough intelligence to look after his property, hand over his property to him. Do not deal with his property wastefully while it is in your charge, out of the apprehension that when he grows up he will take it over from you. If the custodian is in easy circumstances he should not make any charge for administering the property. But if he is poor, let him make use of as much of it as is fair.

The custom among Arab custodians of an orphan’s property was that the property was used as capital for commerce and out of its profit provision was made for the orphan and thus the capital was not destroyed. The custodian made a fair charge for looking after the property. This is the system to which reference is made in these verses. Then it is said: When you hand over the property to its owner you should do so before witnesses. Those of you who are likely to leave behind minor children should give no directions by way of testament which should operate unfairly against the children. Those who consume the substance of orphans unjustly only devour fire into their bellies and shall enter a blazing fire.

It is to be observed how many aspects of honesty and integrity God Almighty has set forth in these verses. A truly honest person is one who keeps in mind all these aspects. If this is not done with perfect intelligence his trustworthiness would cover many hidden dishonesties.’ (The Philosophy of the teachings of Islam, pp. 53 – 55)

The next commandment is: ‘**And give full measure and weight with equity.**’ Here, the general directive is to carry out one’s trade with honesty and without any form of deception. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) said that while selling a commodity any defect or flaw in the commodity should be made obvious so that the buyer is aware of it. Regarding this God states in the Qur’an: ‘**...that is best and most commendable in the end.**’(17:36) Indeed, honesty gains customers’ trust and this in turns is profitable for the trader. God states that deception creates disorder. Alas that the greater the Qur’an unfolds these commandments, the worse Muslims are becoming as regards honesty. The condition of the Companions of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was such that one of them had a horse to sell and he fixed its price at 500 Dirhams. A Companion liked the horse and said that 500 Dirhams was not the right price. The seller assumed the buyer would

offer a lower amount. On the contrary, the buyer said it was such a fine horse that its price should be 2000 Dirhams. And thus they argued over the price! Such was the standard of Muslims who kept the company of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and his Companions.

Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) related an incident in this regard. He went to Kashmir for sight-seeing as a young man and liked some of the exclusive carpets which are hand-woven in Kashmir. The carpet-maker crowed that his carpets were of very high quality. Hazrat Musleh Maud had further sight-seeing to do, so he ordered a few carpets to take as gifts and left. On his return he found all the carpets a good few inches small in length and width than he had ordered. When Hazrat Musleh Maud drew the man's attention that he was charging the same amount of money for the carpets which were considerably smaller in size and reminded him of the size he had ordered and said that people around were witness to it, rather than get embarrassed, the man repetitively kept say: 'I am Muslim and you are saying I did this and that! Hazrat Khalifatul Masih said it is now quite common to gloss over wrongdoing by asserting that one is a Muslim! He said a [Pakistani] Basmati rice exporter once told him that when packaging rice for export they mixed inferior grain of rice in the middle of a bag of superior grain rice through a large pipe so that only the good quality rice was visible. This is the reason the market is dominated by Indian rice, although Indian rice is not of as good quality as the Pakistan grain but due to the dishonesty Pakistani rice is not imported by countries. Maybe now some exporters from Pakistan, including some Ahmadis, bring in some rice, otherwise this black-marketing had stopped export of Pakistani rice.

A Hadith relates that if the buyer and the seller speak the truth and disclose any defect in the merchandise God would bless the trade. If, they both indulge in falsehood and hide any defects or are deceitful, the trade will have no blessing. Another Hadith relates that when a trader measures to sell he should measure generously. The status of an honest trader can be found from the saying of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) where he said that an honest and trustworthy trader is rightful to keep the company of the Prophets, the Truthful and the Martyrs.

May God enable those who associate themselves to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) to uphold the standards of honesty and trustworthiness in accordance with God's commandment and the Prophet's pronouncements. We should also self-reflect, there are many Ahmadis traders/business people. Are our practices in accordance with God's commandments? Are we honouring the rights of the vulnerable? Are we being fair in our businesses? Are we fulfilling the rights of every strata of society? Do we protect ourselves against all evil? Ramadan draws attention to virtues, we should also be drawn to these matters. May God make it so that we shun each evil that God has forbidden!