

Friday Sermon: Be watchful of your trusts and covenants

April 12th, 2013

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih recited the following verse at the start of Friday sermon:

‘Verily, Allah commands you to make over the trusts to those entitled to them, and that, when you judge between men, you judge with justice. And surely excellent is that with which Allah admonishes you! Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.’ (4:59)

As most Jama’ats are aware, this is the year of elections all over the Jama’at. Elections of Ameers, sadrs and other office holders are held every three years. In some places the elections have already started. Majlis e Intikhab exists in larger Jama’ats which elects office holders. While it is essential to have elections in order to run the structure of the Jama’at in an orderly manner, it is also very important to elect the right person to uphold the dues of office. Indeed the matter is so significant that the Holy Qur’an draws attention to it, detailing what kind of people should be chosen for office. It also addresses the office holders admonishing them that mere holding of an office is not enough, the dues of the office need to be discharged and when these dues are not discharged one incurs God’s displeasure.

The first responsibility cited in the aforementioned verse is that holding an office is a trust; therefore elect those who are the best in your view. Consider whether they are worthy and capable of holding the office or not. The greater the responsibility regarding which you come together to give your opinion to the Khalifa of the time, the more you need to ponder over it and pray for it. Vote should not be cast based on one’s relations, friendships or clannish preferences. God will not only hold to account office holders, rather, voters will also be held answerable as to why did they not correctly cast their vote. The verse draws attention that if one does not have sufficient information about those who are to be voted for, then one should pray to God that one is inclined to vote for the person who is the best in God’s sight. Indeed, God is All-Hearing, All-Seeing and is even aware of what is in hearts, therefore none can deceive Him. God helps when a Jama’at of believers will cast their vote after praying in this vein to elect office holders.

It is our Jama’at tradition to pray before every task and elections are also preceded with prayer. Election proceedings which are carried out with complete sincerity are blessed by God. Votes should be cast rising above one’s personal inclination and connections. Long-term Ahmadis are aware of this and the newcomers and the youngsters should also know that [our Jama’at] elections are a process of recommendation; the final decision is made by the Khalifa of the time. In certain circumstances in spite of a person receiving majority vote, the office is given to another. It should also be clear that Ameer of a country has the jurisdiction to approve of some local offices and also has the right to choose/appoint someone who has not received majority of votes. However, Ameers should generally respect majority of votes. UK and European countries, USA, Canada and Australia should note that although regulations allow the Ameer to appoint an alternative person to one who has received majority of votes, in this year’s elections if they wish to make any changes, they have to refer to Hadhrat Khalifatul

Masih and get his approval. However, Pakistan and India may carry on proceedings on local level as per the regulations. The national amila of each country is approved by the Khalifa of the time in any case.

The verse states: ‘...**make over the trusts to those entitled to them...**’ and this is applicable to office holders as well. People are appointed, as opposed to elected, to certain positions and certain tasks. For example secretary Rishta Nata and other tasks that are allocated to people within departments. When appointing people to such positions Ameers and sadrs should not follow personal preferences and connections. On the contrary they should thoroughly assess members of the Jama’at and appoint the person who appears the best; otherwise it would be nepotism which Islam shuns. However, if someone appoints a relative or a friend to a task on merit, those who are inclined to make objections, do unnecessarily object. They should desist from doing so. It is not sin to be close to an Ameer or an office holder and one should not be deprived to serve the Jama’at based on this. This matter has been clarified because some people raise such objections.

God states in the verse: ‘...**you judge with justice...**’ If nepotism and favouritism is practised justice is not done and matters lose blessings. Just and fair decisions should be made by office holders as regards every member of the Jama’at. It should not be that if someone is a friend of such and such or is from such and such family different treatment is extended to him while contradictory decisions are made for others. Such matters create anxiety in Jama’at. If Khalifa of the time asks for a report into a matter, correct report should be submitted for it has been enjoined: ‘...**you judge with justice...**’, if an incorrect report is submitted it is possible that based on it the Khalifa of the time will make an incorrect decision and will be thus [unknowingly] involved in the sin of those who gave the incorrect report. Each task, each service that is required of one should be done with thoughtfulness and honesty. Holding an office is not greatness, in fact it is a huge responsibility which should be fulfilled with prayers. God states that He is ‘...**All-Hearing, All-Seeing...**’ He listens to prayers, especially when prayer is made to come up to scratch as regards His commandments. Just as God scrutinises one who casts vote, He also scrutinises office holders. If office holders do not employ justice, God states they will be held accountable. It is a great cause for concern for everyone who has been entrusted to serve in some way or the other.

People are desirous of office. If they knew what a huge responsibility it is and failing to honour it can incur God’s displeasure, more than others, each office holder would night and day be engaged in Istaghfar (seeking forgiveness from God). Each office holder should be mindful that after being elected and approved he is not free, in fact he is bound to serve to the best of his capacities and failing to do so can incur God’s displeasure. Each office holder has to give individual due of every member of the Jama’at as well as collective dues of the Jama’at. Each office holder should reflect that their position does not negatively affect the Jama’at or discredits its name. Models should be maintained of exemplary discharging of religious duties as well as worldly duties. It cannot be said that something is one’s personal matter, it has no connection with the Jama’at, and therefore one is free to do as one pleases. Each office holder should understand that his person is bound by the interests of the Jama’at in every matter. This view should be inculcated by every office holder and people who abide by this view should be elected. In other words, votes should be cast for those who have a high standard of Taqwa (righteousness). If we claim that having accepted the Imam of the age we

have enhanced our standard of Taqwa and we discharge of our trust more than others, then responsibilities owed to Jama'at should be undertaken with due care and diligence.

God states in the Holy Qur'an: '**And who are watchful of their trusts and their covenants**' (23:9) This commandment needs to be kept in view by everyone within their sphere. Trusts should not be honoured in cursory manner. Rather, one should perform one's tasks in an in-depth and meticulous manner. Those people should be elected to office who are serious about work and those who are elected should also perform their tasks to the best of their abilities. It is the office holder who has to abide by the adage of 'giving preference to faith over worldly matters' more than others. It is against Islamic teaching to be desirous of office. However, if one wishes to be of service or if one is entrusted to serve, then it should be remembered that this cannot be realised unless one fulfils one's covenant in its entirety.

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) elucidates the matter of fulfilling covenants:

'Allah the Exalted has stated in this noble verse: '**And who are watchful of their trusts and their covenants**'...those who do not only possess the excellence of overcoming the base desires of Nafse Ammarah (self that incites to evil) and have thus triumphed over its passions. Rather, they try as far as possible to be mindful of every aspect of all trusts and all covenants of God and His creation and try to tread the intricate paths of Taqwa. They stay on this course as much as their strength allows...The word 'Ra'oon' (covenants) in the verse...is spoken in the Arabic idiom when a person follow intricate paths in any matter in accordance to his strength and wishes to fulfil its every minute detail and does not wish to leave out any aspect. Thus, the verse signifies that believers ... tread fine paths of Taqwa to the best of the abilities they have and do not wish to leave out any aspect which relates to trusts and covenants and they regard making concession to everyone. They do not derive joy in broadly considering themselves truthful and honest, in fact they are fearful lest they privately commit any breach of trust. They continue to reflect as best as they can on all their matters lest they have any inner defect or flaw...this is Taqwa.

In short these are the believers who are not unrestrained in their matters, be they regarding God or be they regarding people. In fact owing to the fear lest they are held blameworthy in the sight of Allah the Exalted, they take extensive care of their trusts and covenants. They ever scrutinise their trusts and covenants and regularly examine their inner condition microscopically through Taqwa for fear that covertly their trusts and covenants may have some defect. They employ the trusts they have been given by Allah the Exalted, for example all their faculties, limbs, life, property and honour etc. to the best of their abilities, bound by Taqwa and with great care at their appropriate time. They are ever engaged with supreme honesty and as far as possible to try and fulfil the promise they made with Allah the Exalted at the time of accepting faith. Similarly, as best as they can, they implement with Taqwa whatever trusts of people they have or matters that come under the jurisdiction of trusts. If there is conflict, they resolve it in view of Taqwa, even if the resolution is detrimental to them.' [Translated from Tafseer of the Holy Qur'an by the Promised Messiah^{as}, Vol III, pp. 366 – 367]

'The spiritual beauty of man is to walk along all the finer ways of righteousness. They are the attractive features of spiritual beauty. It is obvious that to be mindful of the trusts of God

Almighty, and to fulfil all the covenants of faith, and to employ all faculties and limbs both overt, like eyes and ears and hands and feet and others like them, and those that are covert, like the mind and other faculties and qualities, on their proper occasions and to restrain them from coming into action on improper occasions, and to be warned against the subtle attacks of vice and to be mindful of the rights of one's fellow beings, is the way of perfecting one's spiritual beauty. God Almighty has in the Holy Qur'an designated righteousness as a raiment. *Libas-ut-taqwa* is an expression of the Holy Qur'an. This is an indication that spiritual beauty and spiritual ornament are achieved through righteousness. Righteousness means that one must be mindful even of the smallest details of the Divine trusts and covenants and also of all the trusts and covenants of one's fellow beings, as far as it may be possible. That is, one must try to fulfil, to the best of one's ability, all the requirements in their minutest details.' [Brahine-Ahmadiyya, Part V, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 21, pp. 209-210 – Essence of Islam, Vol. I. pp. 347 - 348]

Unless standard of Taqwa is high dues of trusts and covenants of both God and mankind cannot be paid. Office holders are specifically considered trustees of both. Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih once again drew the attention of the members of the Jama'at to pray and elect those who fulfil their trusts. For this, everyone has to have high standard of Taqwa and everyone needs to self-reflect and enhance their level of Taqwa. Office holders are elected by members of the Jama'at from among members. Below are the qualities that office holders in particular and believers in general need to have:

Fulfilment of covenant: If the level of this is high within the Jama'at, it will also be high among the office holders. Rights are not awarded when covenants are not honoured. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) has taught us that rights of others should be awarded even if it means one has to endure hardship in the process. Islam is a peaceable religion and though it lays tremendous emphasis on peaceable ways, there is widespread breaking of covenants and disorder among Muslims. This also has an effect on us Ahmadis. Covenants that need to be fulfilled and honoured are not just business pacts. Rather marriage is also a pact but people deceive each other in domestic matters. Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih said he has mentioned this before that there are some who perform their Jama'at work very well but do not fulfil their family duties. This is breaking of pacts and is worthy of chastisement in the sight of God. He states: **'...for the covenant shall be questioned about.'** [\(17:35\)](#) God has indicated sign of the pious as: **'...and those who fulfil their promise when they have made one...'** [\(2:178\)](#) If Ahmadis wish to elect pious office holders, they should also analyse how much they fulfil their own covenants.

It is also stated that to create a peaceable society be mindful of the sentiments of others. It is stated: **'...Do not slander your own people, nor taunt each other with nicknames...'** [\(49:12\)](#) The Arabic word used in the verse for slander has wider meanings. It also means to push aside, to find faults in others or to say something which is hurtful. We note that sometimes office holders do not control their emotions and hurt the sentiments of those who they deal with and at times of their colleagues. It happens that those of weaker faith not only turn against the office holders but also become dismayed with the Jama'at. If office holders do not take care in this regard it leads to the person they are dealing with to have bad feelings about office holders and the Jama'at. The verse also draws attention not to taunt people with names they do not like and to treat everyone with respect. This is a great quality that office

holders should have. Although each believer should be bound by this but office holders should be specifically mindful.

Another quality of office holders should be to spend Jama'at funds with extreme care. Under no circumstances should there be wastage. Although departments with large expenses, like Ziafat, Langar, Jalsa Salana also have large budgets but those in-charge of these departments need to be very careful. Estimations should be made and minimum amount of expenses should be incurred. This is the correct way of fulfilling trust. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) did not ever worry about funds coming in but he was concerned about people spending the funds properly.

Another quality of an office holder should be to avoid all that is idle and vain. Indeed, this is a sign of every believer but those entrusted with obligations of the Jama'at should be prime example of this. God states: **'And who shun all that which is vain,'** [\(23:4\)](#) The standard of best among believers should be very high in this regard. They should not indulge in frivolous talk and should not be part of gatherings where there is derision and disrespect of others. At times office holders also tend to get together and talk about others in mocking manner. This should be avoided. Office holders should also not be part of gatherings where religious traditions are disregarded.

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said that a believer is one who disassociates himself from vain and idle connections and disassociating oneself from vain and idle connections is a source of connecting to God. Thus, to rid one's heart of vain matters is to connect one's heart with God.

God states that miserliness does not become a believer. Office holders should avoid wastage and be moderate in spending, but should not be miserly. One should spend wherever there is just requirement. It should not be that one is generous for some and miserly for others.

A special quality of office holders should be able to control their anger. It is stated: **'...those who suppress anger...'** [\(3:135\)](#). Sometimes annoyance has to be expressed for reformation in Jama'at matters but office holders should be able to suppress anger. It is unacceptable for office holders to be angry at every little thing. They should be mindful that the Qur'an states: **'...speak to men kindly...'** [\(2:84\)](#). If this is followed people will stop making complaints against office holders.

Office holders should treat their co-workers with kindness. The stance should not be like that of worldly superiors and subordinates. If someone makes a mistake it should be gently explained to them and there should be no interrogation like worldly superiors. Indeed, if someone is not complying with matters, it should be dealt with and if needed reported. However, there should not be an atmosphere where divisions are created.

Office holders should have the quality of extending regard to guests. Anyone who comes into an office should be met with respect and offered a seat; this is a very important matter. One should stand up to greet them. This courtesy should be followed by elected office holders as well as regular workers of Jama'at. This enhances and not decreases respect.

Humility is a quality which every Ahmadi should instil, especially office holders. It is stated: **‘And walk not in the earth haughtily...’** (17:38) God does not like arrogance in ordinary people. As such, God would not even like momentary arrogance in those who offer their services for His sake. This quality should be adopted by all our office holders to the fullest.

Another important aspect, especially for those who are entrusted with work related to making decisions and conciliatory work, like Islahi Committee or Qadha Board, is to be mindful of God’s commandment: **‘...Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness...’** (5:9) Every decision should be based on fairness and justice. Sometimes decisions are brought to Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih’s notice which have not been thoroughly looked into as a result people about whom the decisions are made become anxious. If decisions are based on clear commandments of Shariah then it should be clearly stated. Qazis should be particularly mindful of this.

Wherever there are needy and poor people, they should be looked after by Jama’at. It is the task of relevant Ameer and office holders to care for them within the resources available. In this regard action does not necessarily have to be taken only after requests are made. Rather, situation should be regularly assessed.

A huge responsibility that falls on every Ameer, every sadr and every office holder is: **‘...enjoin what is good and forbid evil...’** (3:111). This should be kept in mind at all times. Of course it is only possible to abide by this when one constantly self-reflects and makes his word and deed congruous, inculcates love and fear of God and looks for ways of Taqwa that God has drawn our attention to. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) once said in this regard that Taqwa does not constitute avoiding a few sins and adopting a few virtues. Rather, Taqwa means avoiding every minor sin and adopting every kind of virtue.

In conclusion Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih said: ‘These are the standards that need to be adopted by us to become those who enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil and for fulfilling our covenants. May Allah the Exalted enable members of the Jama’at as well as the office holders, those who have been elected and those who are yet to be elected, and me to fulfil our trusts and covenants.’