**June 2, 1916**

**Spiritual significance of the Holy Prophet’s Traditional Marriage Sermon**

**Guarding against Evil (*Taqwa*) and its Significance**

(This Marriage Sermon was given by Maulana Muhammad Ali at the marriage ceremony of Khawaja Bashir Ahmad, son of Khawaja Kamaluddin)

I bear witness that none deserves to be served besides Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the servant and messenger of Allah.

After this, I seek the protection of Allah from the accursed devil.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.



O you who believe, keep your duty to Allah, as it ought to be kept, and die not unless you are Muslims. (3:102)



O you who believe, keep your duty to Allah and speak straight words. (33:70)



He will put your deeds into a right state for you, and forgive you your sins. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, he indeed achieves a mighty success. (33:71)



O people, keep your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind), and spread from these two many men and women. And keep your duty to Allah, by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship. Surely Allah is ever a Watcher over you. (4:1)

**Distinctive Characteristic of the Holy Prophet Muhammad**

Marriage nuptials amongst most nations are brief and the declaration of matrimony does not take much time. Announcement of marriage only informs the public that a certain man is getting married to a particular woman. Every nation has however added on ceremonies that are not an essential part of marriage. Our Holy Prophet Muhammad mandated the marriage sermon instead of these ceremonies. It addresses the audience gathered on the occasion with specific exhortations.

**Exemplary Preservation of the Holy Prophet’s Tradition**

Allah the Most High has given such excellence and eminence to the Holy Prophet that a whole community was raised to preserve his sayings and doings. Today, after the passage of thirteen hundred years there is no doubt about the words coming out of his mouth and his deeds. Take the example of obligatory prayers. No one doubts the precise wording of these prayers and the way he performed them. All sects of Muslims agree to the number of *raka’hs* in each prayer. Same is true regarding Fasting and Pilgrimage and also the different postures of Prayer (*rukuh, sajdah, qiyam* etc.). In short there is no dissension in the essentials and the basic principles of faith. Minutest details of these are preserved. Same degree of certitude exists about the verses of the Holy Quran recited by the Holy Prophet Muhammad as part of the marriage sermon. Such detailed guidance does not exist amongst other nations and they have to create a way for themselves in these matters. Under the present circumstances, when every nation is striving for its own success, Muslims are greatly indebted to their early generations and to Islam for clearly defining the path for them.

**Importance of the Marriage Sermon**

What is unique about this sermon that draws our attention? It is the three verses mandated for this sermon by the Holy Prophet:

O you who believe, keep your duty to Allah, as it ought to be kept, and die not unless you are Muslims. (3:102)

O you who believe, keep your duty to Allah and speak straight words. (33:70)

O people, keep your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind), and spread from these two many men and women. And keep your duty to Allah, by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship. Surely Allah is ever a Watcher over you. (4:1).

The common thread observed in these verses is the repeated stress on keeping one’s duty to Allah (*Taqwa*).

**Commonly misunderstood Quranic words**

Many amongst you will get anxious upon hearing the word *Taqwa*, perhaps wondering what have I started! You may be asking yourself the question; the time of marriage is associated with fun and frolic, what has it to do with keeping our duty to Allah? In fact, the word *Taqwa*, (keeping one’s duty to Allah) is one of those words that are commonly misunderstood. Every nation goes through three stages of understanding these religious terms. There is the time of clear understanding of their meaning and their proper usage. It is followed by a stage when the true meaning of the word is forgotten, but it is still regarded with some degree of respect and reverence. Eventually comes a period when the word acquires a wrongful implication. Muslim attitude has undergone a similar change. Today, we observe that not only are they unaware of the real meaning of these words, there is also a lack of respect for them in their hearts. A fourth stage sets in when people who were familiar with the real meaning of these words and put them into practice are considered to have lost their mind. To understand this condition I want to draw your attention towards the past history of India. The Hindu nation has attributed all kinds of evil to their pious religious figures. Consider the example of lord Krishna. He was a very pious person and it is our belief that he was raised by Allah the Most High for the purpose of reformation of his nation. His followers, however, have started to attribute to him the evil deeds they want to commit themselves. They have fallen into depravity and want to malign the character of a noble servant of Allah.

Thank God and His benevolence! Muslims have not yet been afflicted by this fourth stage although they have come as far as the third. Beginning or the first stage was the time period of our Holy Prophet Muhammad. This was followed by a period of two centuries after his death. The *Hadith* states:

Best of the generations is my generation, then those who follow them, then those who follow them, then after them will come those who will pride themselves in the abundance of wealth and love plumpness (Tr.31:39).

 **Defamation of the word Muslim**

Holy Prophet Muhammad has pointed out that in the three hundred years after him, spiritual condition of the Muslims will remain strong. After this although the people started to regress from their exalted state, the sacred terms still did not lose their reverence and significance. Our time is the third stage when the sacred terms are beginning to be wrongfully implicated and interpreted. How much notoriety has the word Muslim been associated with in this age! Those of our friends who travel around and meet people have experienced this. The word Muslim is associated with ill repute and Muslims are regarded as an abject nation. This is the state of lack of knowledge and people have strayed far from the truth.

**Exalted Status of Muslims**

It is indeed a sad state of affairs for a nation the Holy Quran describes as:

And thus We have made you an exalted nation that you may be the bearers of witness to the people and (that) the Messenger may be a bearer of witness to you. (2:143)

The Messenger of Allah is designated as the spiritual guide and leader for all humanity in this verse of the Holy Quran. We observe that people give the least importance and respect to him today. Even mentioning his name is considered demeaning. Similarly take the example of Prayer. What a cogent weapon was the institution of the five daily obligatory prayers to combat evil! Today, however, the individual saying his prayers is taunted. I am not saying that the example of all those praying is beyond reproach. Their condition also falls short. In general, however, prayer is ridiculed and the same applies to fasting.

What is Pilgrimage? A condition where the pilgrim discards all the embellishments of his body and with bare head and feet, shrouded in white cloth he circumambulates the Sacred House, providing testimony to the Oneness of his beloved God. Pilgrimage represents the final stage of love of the spiritual wayfarer for his Master, where he leaves all his worldly possessions for the love of his Nurturer unto perfection (*Rabb*). Today the word for pilgrim (*haji*) is synonymous with misdeeds. There is a story going around that that a man was beating up a poor old woman. She cried out, “O my son *Haji,* please do not hurt me! People asked her how do you know he is a *Haji*? Her reply was that no one besides a *Haji* can be guilty of such cruelty”. The responsibility for this falls upon those who while performing these sacred rituals do not inform the public of their real significance. Their deeds in fact are such that they strengthen the negative perception in the public mind.

The Holy Quran describes the obligatory prayers (*salaat*) in these terms:

Recite that which has been revealed to thee of the Book and keep up prayer. Surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil; and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest (force). And Allah knows what you do. (29:45).

Prayer keeps one away from indecency and evil. The moral condition of the nation today has deteriorated so much that a person who prays is called upon to provide false testimony in court. They have brought down the practice of their prayers to such a lowly state that rather than staying away from evil and indecency, they are guilty of it.

**Exalted status of Guarding against Evil** **(*Taqwa*):**

**The Sole standard of Honor before Allah**

The Holy Quran has explained the significance of guarding against evil in these words:

This Book, there is no doubt in it, is a guide to those who keep their duty. (2:2)

Guarding against evil or keeping one’s duty is the very basis of being guided on the right path. This guidance (*Hidayat*) means not only being shown the right way but also being led on it till one reaches the goal. Guarding against evil is thus laid down as the essential condition to reach this goal. Keeping one’s duty is the standard that measures the degree of progress made by a Muslim to reach this goal.

O mankind, surely We have created you from a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other. Surely the noblest of you with Allah is the most dutiful of you. Surely Allah is Knowing, Aware. (49:13)

 For you to be honored before Allah, the standard is not your wealth, tribe or family, but abstaining from evil and performance of good deeds. The Holy Quran addresses not one individual but the whole of humanity in this verse and informs us that in reality we are all as it were members of one family. Just as a brother who is wealthy cannot deny his relationship with his poorer sibling, similarly one human being cannot exclude another from the brotherhood of man. The world discriminates between tribes and nations. Some nations look down upon others with disdain. As a result divisions have been created within the lowest to the highest level of their national consciousness.

Allah the Most High informs us:

And there is no animal in the earth, nor a bird that flies on its two wings, but (they are) communities like yourselves. We have not neglected anything in the Book. Then to their Lord will they be gathered. (6:38)

All these animals that crawl upon the earth and the birds that fly in the air are communities like you. If we ponder upon this it appears to be the truth, man certainly pales in comparison with the immensity and diversity of Allah’s creation. Holy Quran draws our attention to the truth that you are just a community amongst the many communities created by Allah the Most High. Your greatness or smallness is not your national or tribal identity, but your real distinction lies in keeping your duty to Allah. This is what gives you honor before Allah. Your wealth, eminence and worldly honor that you gain by any other means are all short-lived. This is the only honor that remains behind, the one that Allah the Most High has ordained for you. You should therefore keep your duty to Allah, guard against evil and serve God’s creation. Before your life comes to an end, acquire this true distinction.

**The real meaning of Keeping your Duty to Allah ( *ita qullah*)**



O people, keep your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind), and spread from these two many men and women. And keep your duty to Allah (*ita qullah*), by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship (*wal arham*). Surely Allah is ever a Watcher over you. (4:1)

The root word *itiqa* means guarding, taking care of, protecting. In this, the third verse of the marriage sermon, we are told to do *taqwa* of Allah and *taqwa* of the wombs. Now if *taqwa* means to be afraid of someone or something then we would have to translate this verse as, fear of Allah and fear of the wombs. Fearing the wombs does not make sense, therefore the real meaning is to safeguard the ties of relationship that are going to be formed by marriage. In the beginning of the verse we are told:

O people, keep your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind).

Single being refers to a single pair and defines the principle or a unit of the human family. One pair of the human race is referred to as one unit. It is a result of the union of a man and a woman, representing all humanity whereby ties of relationship form and evolve. It is therefore, likened to a single being. What an amazing and appropriate verse has been selected for the marriage ceremony! Marriage is the source of extending relationship and these ties are formed by the union of a male and a female*.* These ties lead to a new way of life, therefore in the words *watta-qul-arham*, special emphasis is laid upon safeguarding the ties of relationship. What an amazing and profound vision was given to the Holy Prophet Muhammad by Allah the Most High!

**Unique Example of maintaining the ties of Relationship**

Besides many other things, the Holy Prophet instructed his companions that when you go to Egypt take special care of the inhabitants of that land because we have ties of relationship with them. It was three thousand five hundred years before this that Hazrat *Hajira* who was from Egypt married Prophet Abraham. It was because of this ancestral bond that the Holy Prophet emphasized the people of Egypt should be given special care. What a breadth of vision! Over three thousand five hundred years have passed, there is no existent relationship. They are deeply immersed in idol worship associating others with God. Their cruelty towards the children of Israel is no hidden matter but they are still to be looked after because we have ties of relationship with them. You cannot find such an example of love and mercy as was manifested by the Holy Prophet. That is why he deserves to be called the mercy to all nations. A river of Mercy is flowing from on High and washing the heart of this most excellent soul. He remembers with love those who have abused him, and is striving to save them from painful experiences and difficulties.

**An Embodiment of Mercy**

The Holy Prophet is an embodiment of love, just as Allah is the Most Merciful. Look at all the cruelty he and his companions had to suffer at the hands of the Makkan disbelievers. The land of Arabia is a hot desert where hundreds of people can die because of the excessive heat. Companions of the Holy Prophet were made to lay bare on the hot desert sand with weights put on their chest in the searing heat. These tyrants got hold of a Muslim lady and subjected her to extreme cruelty by tying her legs to camels and driving them in opposite directions. Some gave up their lives in this way while others were forced to seek refuge in Abyssinia. In spite of suffering such extreme persecution when Makkah was conquered, the Holy Prophet instead of admonishing those who had committed all these atrocities, forgave all their misdeeds by stating:

No reproof be against you this day. (12:92)

He did not even say we will hang a few of your ringleaders. This is the magnitude of his forgiving nature. Who could exceed such magnanimity!

**Fulfilling the Rights of others**

*Taqwa* therefore means fulfilling the rights of others. It is first stated: O people keep your duty to your Lord (*Rabbakum*). The words *Rabbakum* (*your Lord*) are used because *Rabb* is the Nurturer unto perfection of all creation. The words: keep your duty to your Lord (*Rabbakum*), therefore refer to both kinds of rights. Our attention is drawn by the Nurturer unto perfection of all creation that we should also be cognizant of the rights of the rest of His creation. Keeping one’s duty or (*Taqwa*) is awareness and continuation of effort to fulfill them. It is mentioned in the *Hadith*: Nobody amongst you can become a perfect believer until his love for me (the Holy Prophet) is more than his parents, children and all other people. Another *Hadith* states: Until one desires for his brother what he desires for his own self.

In other words we are commanded to fulfill our duties to Allah and those that we have towards the rest of humanity. What were these duties? Besides other duties they also included the duty of defending the Holy Prophet against the attacks of the disbelievers and being ready to sacrifice one’s life in this quest. Love and honor for the Holy Prophet should be such that one is prepared to sacrifice his life and wealth for this purpose.

**Welfare of God’s creation is to be given Preference**

During the time of the Holy Prophet there were a few residents of Madinah who were constantly making secret alliances with the external enemies of Muslims. They were called the hypocrites. When some of these hypocrites had to participate in battle:

They say: If we return to Madinah, the mightier will surely drive out the meaner there-from. (63:8)

Allah the Most High responds to their statement thus:

And might belongs to Allah and His Messenger and the believers, but the hypocrites know not. (63:8).

Might and honor really belongs to Allah, His Messenger and the believers. The hypocrites were indeed clueless of this. Allah the Most High had ordained for the Muslims to reach a state of eminence and distinction and for this He commanded them to truthfully follow the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Is there anyone of you who has reached the exalted state the companions of the Holy Prophet had reached? What Allah really wants from us is to manifest goodness towards His creation.

The Holy Quran states: You are the best nation raised up for men (3:110).

You are the best of nations only if you are doers of good to Allah’s creation. If this is not the case, you do not deserve the title. Thus Islam, the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet have made it clear to the Muslims, that your real honor and exaltation lies only if you strive to do good to humanity.

And further on (4:1) we are told to (keep your duty to) the ties of relationship (*watta-qul-arham*) informing us that if you seek goodness for all humanity your doing of good to the near relatives will be even more. As this circle expands, it become weaker.

**Spiritual condition of the Heart is the Source of Honor and Distinction**

It is amazing how far the moral condition of the Muslims has deteriorated. There are many who totally disregard the rights of others for their personal benefit. The Holy Quran shows us the way to achieve moral greatness by working in the way of Allah and serving His creation. Manifest in your deeds the highest level of (*itiqa*) guarding against evil and submitting to the Will of Allah. There is a passion in the heart of the spiritual wayfarer whereby he distinguishes himself from the rest. The greater the degree of his submission the more distinguished he becomes. Look how Hazrat Abu Bakr stood out from amongst the rest of the companions of the Holy Prophet. It was not because Hazrat Abu Bakr spent more time in reciting his prayers while the other companions cut short their prayers. These matters are with Allah, only He knows who supplicates longer or in a more appropriate way, or is more dutiful. God only is the Judge of what is in our hearts and He is aware of all our deeds. Create sympathy in your hearts for God’s creation and be the doers of good to it. Show that you hold your religion above the world by your practice. This is *taqwallah* or keeping your duty to Allah. Seeking provision for maintaining their life and taking care of their offspring is a trait common to man, the birds and other animals. If as a human being you manifest the same behavior and fail to excel beyond that, then where lies your distinction? Man has been given a highly exalted status above the rest of His creation by Allah the Most High.

Allah the Most High has given him wealth and power not with the right of ownership, but as a trust. He will hold him accountable for how he spends this trust. It demands that we be more cognizant of the welfare of others above our own. Only looking after one’s selfish interests is against the basic human values. In this lies the real superiority of man over the rest of God’s creation, and helps him to rise above it.

**Sacrifice: The First lesson of Matrimony**

Sacrifice is the first lesson of married life. By making it mandatory for women taken in marriage to be given a dowry, the Holy Quran informs us to sacrifice some of our material comforts for the sake of another person. Looking after a family is a source of many useful lessons for us, that is why besides other matters so much stress has been put on giving the marriage dowry:

And give women their dowries as a free gift. (4:4)

These words in fact imply making of sacrifice the foremost priority for raising the family. The same spirit is embodied in the Quranic commandment where after the service of Allah the Most High, priority is given to the doing of good to parents. The person who treats his parents well truly has the capacity to do good to others. He who cannot treat his family members well lacks the disposition of doing good to the greater human family. The intrinsic capability of goodness towards others that man has been given, has to begin first at home. The standard of a man’s nobility of character is the degree of sacrifice he makes for his wife and children. Allah the Most High has assigned some responsibilities to you and made it mandatory for you to fulfill these duties. Giving of the dowry is the first of these responsibilities.

We have gathered here to announce the marriage of Khawaja Bashir Ahmad Sahib son of Khawaja Kamal-ud-din Sahib to the daughter of Syed Muhammad Shah Sahib advocate. The marriage dowry has been fixed at three thousand Rupees. After this the consent to get married was taken from both parties in the marriage proposal. The audience then prayed for the family to be blessed.