

FRIDAY SERMON OF IMAM ZAFRULLAH DOMUN

14 SEPTEMBER 2012

After reciting the *Tashahhud*, the *Ta'uz* and the first chapter *Al Fatiha* of the Holy Quran Imam Zafrullah Domun said:

It is part of our belief that the teachings of Islam are the best. The Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw} has bequeathed us the best teaching in the book of Allah and he has established a Sunna which Muslims have tried to practice during his lifetime and immediately after. We believe that our salvation is conditional upon our following the example of the Holy Prophet and no one else. The teachings that the Holy Prophet has left us embraces almost all the aspects of our life whether political, economic or social or moral or spiritual. Today I will say a few words about the Islamic teachings with regard to greeting.

To build an Islamic society the exchange of the Islamic greeting is of paramount importance amongst the members of the community. Before I cite some hadith about this matter I would like first of all to start with what Allah says in the Holy Quran about the Islamic greeting. This will give us an idea of its importance in the sight of Allah. He says:

“And when you are greeted with a greeting [of peace], reply with a better greeting or *at least* return it. Surely, Allah takes account of all things.” (4:87)

Hence a good Muslim who knows his religion should reply to the salaam of his brother or sister. A greeting should be simply returned or it should be returned with a better one. For example if someone says “*Assalamo Alaikoum*” the returning greeting which is better should be “*Wa alaikomous salaam wa rahmatoullah wa barakaatohou*”. Or the least returning greeting should be “*wa alaikomous salaam*”. This is what we learn from the Book of Allah. In another verse Allah says:

“But when you enter houses, salute your people — a greeting from your Lord, full of blessing and purity. Thus does Allah make plain to you the commandments that you may understand.”(24:61)

Thus Allah commands us to greet our own people whenever we enter our own houses. Allah knows best what is best for all of us. Here I should add that it is recommended to a Muslim to salute his people whenever he goes out of his home and whenever he or she comes back. There are some other verses in the Holy Quran where Allah speaks about salaam but we will leave them for the time being. I will now give you some Ahadith which will help to illustrate how important this Islamic greeting was in the sight of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}.

Abdullah bin `Amr bin Al-`as^{ra} reported: "A man asked the Messenger of Allah^{saw} "Which act in Islam is the best?" He replied, "To give food, and to greet everyone, whether you know or you do not." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

Hence we learn from the Holy Prophet^{saw} that the best action in Islam is to give food to the poor and to spread salaam. By giving to the poor especially those who cannot fend for themselves one will be fulfilling a very basic need of human beings. By saying salaams one will be spreading peace in society. In fact when we greet someone with the greeting of peace we are making a declaration to that person that he will not get any harm from us. It means we will not be a cause of any kind of trouble for him. In fact this is the mission of the Muslim nation. It is here to do good to others and not to expect anything in return. Has not Allah said of the Muslim people: "You are the best people raised for the good of mankind; you enjoin what is good and forbid evil and believe in Allah....."(3:111). Every Muslim can contribute to our mission of being the best by doing what is expected of us. If we have wealth we should distribute it among the poor so that they might have enough food to eat. But we all should spread the greeting of peace to all and sundry. Here we should remember that the Holy Prophet has said that salaam should be given to those we know and those we do not know.

Concerning the origin of the Islamic greeting we can say that its origin is since Hazrat Adam^{as}. In fact in a hadith reported by Hazrat Abu Huraira^{ra} we learn that the Prophet^{saw} said, "When Allah created Adam^{as} He said to him: `Go and greet that company of angels who are sitting there - and then listen to what they are going to say in reply to your greetings because that will be your greeting and your off-spring's.' Adam^{as} said to the angels: `As-Salamu `Alaikum (may you be safe from evil).' They replied: `As-Salamu `Alaikum wa Rahmatullah (may you be safe from evil, and Mercy of Allah be upon you).' Thus adding in reply to him: `wa Rahmatullah (and Mercy of Allah)' to his greeting." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]. But according to some other Ahadith it is better to add also "*wa barakaatohou*"

In the Islamic society each member has duties and obligations towards one another. These duties and obligations help to make the society cohesive and help to create a sense of togetherness. In western societies more emphasis is laid on the individual rather than the group. Islamic society is

mostly concerned about the group. So we learn that the Holy Prophet imposed seven duties upon all Muslims. They are as follows:

- (1) to visit the sick
- (2) to follow the funeral (of a dead believer),
- (3) to invoke the Mercy of Allah upon one who sneezes (i.e., by saying to him: *Yarhamuk-Allah*),
- (4) to support the weak,
- (5) to help the oppressed,
- (6) to promote the greeting of *'As-Salamu 'Alaikum'*, and
- (7) to help those who swear to do something to keep their oaths.[Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

So whenever a Muslim is sick, it is our duty to visit him. There are many people who take this to heart and make it a duty to visit those who are sick. But there are many who do not care at all about this instruction of the Holy Prophet ^{saw}. There are many other Ahadith which spells out the blessings of visiting the sick but I will mention only one for the time being. In a *Hadith Qudsi* Allah will say on the Day of Judgment: ***“O son of Adam I was sick and you did not visit Me. He will say: O Lord how can I visit You. You are the Lord of the worlds? He says: Did you not know that My servant so and so was sick yet you did not visit him? Did you not know that if you had visited him you would have found Me with him?”*** (Muslim).

Secondly the good Muslim is expected to follow the *Janaza* of the fellow Muslim who has died. It is an occasion to reflect on death, on the temporariness of life, of time, on our own mortality and many other important matters.

Concerning the third duty we should say that many Muslim take it as a light matter and do not respond with *“yarhamokallah”*, meaning “may Allah have mercy upon you” whenever someone sneezes. Each one amongst us should learn these words and teach them to our children who should in time teach to their children.

The fourth duty is to support the weak. A good Muslim will never give support to the strong one in a dispute. He should always side with the weak one but he should also try to be just.

Similarly it is the duty of a Muslim to help someone who is being oppressed. For example if one sees someone who is being beaten by a group of men or women, it is the duty of the Muslim to

intervene to stop this beating. The Muslim should always try to help the oppressed even by restraining the hand of the oppressor.

The sixth duty of a Muslim is that he should try to promote the greeting of *'As-Salamu 'Alaikum'*. It means that we should say it and mean it often. We cannot say salaam to somebody and start a fight with him or her. The many problems that people encounter these days in their lives stem from the fact that they do not know how to get on well with one another. The high rate of divorce in most countries of the world is a blatant example of the inability of two persons who got married out of love for one another but who failed to keep the love growing due to their egoistic mistakes.

The seventh duty is “to help those who swear to do something to keep their oaths”. It was a common practice in ancient societies that people made promises or they swore that they would do such and such thing if their wishes were accomplished. So the prophet has made it incumbent upon a Muslim to help his fellow brother or sister who have to fulfill such oaths.

Another hadith about the importance of saying salaam is reported by Abu Hurairah ^{ra} who said: The Messenger of Allah ^{saw} said, "By Him in Whose Hand is my life! You will not enter Jannah until you believe, and you will not believe until you love one another. Shall I inform you of something which, if you do, you will love one another? Promote greetings amongst yourselves." [Muslim]. So in an Islamic society the mutual love that each member should have for one another is of paramount importance. This love is the glue that helps to keep the group together. And the prophet tells us that saying salaam to one another helps to promote this love within the group.

In another hadith about this matter the Holy Prophet ^{saw} is reported to have said: “O people, exchange greetings of peace (i.e., say: *As-Salamu 'Alaikum* to one another), feed people, strengthen the ties of kinship, and be in prayer when others are asleep, you will enter Jannah in peace.” [At-Tirmidhi]. In this hadith, in addition to what has already been said the Holy Prophet ^{saw} has added the importance of namaz Tahajjud as well and the strengthening of the ties of kinship. Unfortunately many who claim that they are true Muslims have preferred to ignore such clear instructions of the Holy Prophet ^{saw} and obey their leaders who according to them know better how to interpret and practice Islam. What a pity!

From the books of Ahadith we learn how some companions of the Holy Prophet ^{saw} or those who followed them used to put into practice the instructions that they received from him. It is reported in *Muatta* of Imam Malik by At-Tufail bin Ubayy bin Ka`b who said: “I used to visit `Abdullah bin `Umar in the morning and accompany him to the market. `Abdullah offered greetings of peace

to everyone he met on the way, be they sellers of petty goods, traders or poor people. One day when I came to him, he asked me to accompany him to the market. I said to him: "What is the point of your going to the market when you do not sell, nor ask about articles, nor offer a price for them, nor sit down with any company of people. Let us sit down here and talk." He replied: "O Abu Batn, we go to the market to greet everyone we meet."

Here we see the passion of the son of Hazrat Umar to spread salaam within society. Although we are not saying that we should do the same thing, but the least that we can do is that we should spread salaam within our close circle of friends and relatives. Whosoever thinks that it is virtue not to say salaam to practicing Muslims have not understood the message of Islam. Such people only wish that the noble teachings of Islam should be downgraded to conform to the evil that is found in their own souls. They do a disservice to Islam by vitiating its teachings and by spreading hatred and bigotry within the society they live whilst at the same time trying to project that they are very tolerant of others.

Next week, *incha* Allah I will speak about some more Ahadith concerning Salaam. May Allah help each one amongst us to understand and to practice the noble teachings of Islam in our everyday life.