

After reciting the *Tashahhud*, the *Ta'uz* and the first chapter *Al Fatiha* of the Holy Quran Imam Zafrullah Domun read verse 91 of chapter 16 of the Holy Quran in Arabic and then he said:

Every week in every mosque where Jumma sermon is delivered around the world all Muslims whatever their sect are regularly reminded of this important verse of the Holy Quran. It is translated as follows:

“Verily, **Allah enjoins justice**, and the doing of good to others; and giving like kindred; and forbids indecency, and manifest evil, and wrongful transgression. He admonishes **you** that **you** may take heed.”(16:91)

Usually this portion of the Jumma Sermon is delivered in Arabic. In this part of the world not all Muslims do understand Arabic. But as I said before, each one amongst us should do his or her best to understand what is being said in Arabic. With some efforts each one amongst us can easily understand these words. But unfortunately most people do not care and they neglect learning the translations of the words. I will never cease telling the members that they have to know their religion as it should be known. Without knowledge there will be no practice as is expected from us. If these days we see that people are not practicing their religion as it should be it is because of lack of proper knowledge of what religion should be in our life. Fortunately for us we get a proper knowledge of our religion by reading the Holy Quran and by reading books of hadith and by reading the books of Hazrat Masih Maood (as). However we should also say that for proper practice to take place we need also to ask Allah to help us to practice what He expects from us. Hence supplications also are necessary. Anyhow these are words that I keep repeating so that our members might be aware of them and they may practice accordingly.

In the short commentary of the Holy Quran published by Jamaat Ahmadiyya mainstream we have the following notes to help us understand this verse. I think it will be useful to give the full extract because it will help us in understanding the verse. It says:

“The verse contains three commandments and three prohibitions which briefly deal with all the various stages of the moral and spiritual development of man and with both its positive and negative sides. It enjoins justice, the doing of good to others and kindness as between kindred; and forbids indecency, manifest evil and transgression. Justice implies that a person should treat others as he is treated by them. He should return to others the good or evil to the extent or measure to which he receives it from them. Higher than *‘Adl* (justice) is the stage of *ihsān* (goodness) when man should do good to others regardless of what sort of treatment he receives from them, or even if he is maltreated by them. His conduct should not be actuated by considerations of reciprocity. At the last and highest stage of moral development, *viz.*, *‘Itā’i Dhil Qurba* (giving like kindred), a believer is expected to do good to others not in return for any good received from them, nor with the idea of doing more good than the good received, but to do good prompted by a natural impulse, as good is done to very near blood relations. His condition at this stage resembles that of a mother whose love for her children springs from natural impulse. After a believer has attained this stage his moral development becomes complete. These three stages of morals constitute the positive side of man’s moral development. Its negative side is portrayed in the three words, *viz.*, *Fahshaa* (indecency), *Munkar* (manifest evil) and *Baghy* (transgression). *Fahshā’* signifies vice of which the knowledge is confined to the doer and *Munkar* signifies those evils which other men also see and

condemn, though they may not suffer any loss or infringement of their own rights by them. *Baghy*, however, comprehends all those vices and evils which not only are seen, felt and denounced by other people but which do them positive harm also. These three simple words cover all conceivable vices.”

When we hear what Hazrat Masih Maood (as) has commented on this verse we will understand how it is not that easy to put the message of this verse into practice. He says:

“This means that we are commanded to return good for good, and to exercise benevolence when it is called for, and to do good with natural eagerness as between kindred, when that should be appropriate (16:91). God Almighty forbids transgression or that you should exercise benevolence out of place or should refrain from exercising it when it is called for; or that you should fall short of exercising graciousness as between kindred on its proper occasion, or should extend it beyond its appropriate limit. This verse sets forth three gradations of doing good. The first is the doing of good in return for good. This is the lowest gradation and even an average person can easily acquire this gradation that he should do good to those who do good to him. The second gradation is a little more difficult than the first, and that is to take the initiative in doing good out of pure benevolence. This is the middle grade. Most people act benevolently towards the poor, but there is a hidden deficiency in benevolence, that the person exercising benevolence is conscious of it and desires gratitude or prayer in return for his benevolence. If on any occasion the other person should turn against him, he considers him ungrateful. On occasion he reminds him of his benevolence or puts some heavy burden upon him. The benevolent ones have been admonished by God Almighty: “Render not vain your alms by reproaches or injury” (2:265). The Arabic word for alms (*Sadaqah*) is derived from a root (*sidq*) that means sincerity. If the heart is not inspired by sincerity in bestowing alms, the almsgiving ceases to be alms and becomes mere display. That is why those who exercise benevolence have been admonished by God Almighty not to render vain their benevolence by reproaches or injury. The third grade of doing good is graciousness as between kindred. God Almighty directs that in this grade there should be no idea of benevolence or any desire for gratitude, but good should be done out of such eager sympathy as, for instance, a mother does good to her child. This is the highest grade of doing good which cannot be exceeded. But God Almighty has conditioned all these grades of doing good with their appropriate time and place. The verse cited above clearly indicates that if these virtues are not exercised in their proper places they would become vices. For instance, if equity exceeds its limits it would take on an unwholesome aspect and would become indecent. In the same way, misuse of benevolence would take on a form which would be repelled by reason and conscience; and in the same way graciousness between kindred would become transgression. The Arabic word for transgression is *baghy*, which connotes excessive rain which ruins crops. A deficiency in the discharge of an obligation or an excess in its discharge are both *baghy*. In short, whichever of these three qualities is exercised out of place becomes tainted. That is why they are all three qualities conditioned by the due observance of place and occasion. It should be remembered that equity or benevolence or graciousness between kindred are not in themselves moral qualities. They are man's natural conditions and faculties that are exhibited even by children before they develop their reason. Reason is a condition of the exercise of a moral quality and there is also a condition that

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every moral quality should be exercised in its proper place and on its proper occasion.”(the Philosophy of the teachings of Islam P70-71)

Every week a Muslim is reminded of this great verse of the Holy Quran so that we might take heed in our dealings with others and in what we do personally. Justice is stressed. But we should move above it and requite all those people who do good to us with equal benevolence. And if we are able we deal with people as if they are our own. We do good without expecting anything else in return. In all relationship we see that it is only a mother who can display such selfless love and Muslims are reminded that they should imitate the love of mothers for their children in their dealings with each other. Now we might ask if each Muslim could understand this fundamental teaching of Islam why is it that we see so much strife in society ? With the passage of time I have come to believe strife or conflict is bound to exist wherever there are men. But in order to help men to exercise proper restraint and not start fighting with one another we should always remember the parameters that have been put in these verses. First of all we should learn to respect one another and not try to harm anyone with either our tongue or our hands. However if even then differences exist and we think that we have been wronged we can have recourse to a neutral person who acts as judge. That judge is supposed to hear and judge matters impartially without taking sides. Muslims have played an important role in the administration of Justice. Unfortunately these days we do not see high standards of Justice where Muslims have authority. In secular society there is more scope for a person to resort to justice than in any country or group ran by Muslims. There are some exceptions indeed.

Jamaat Ahmadiyya mainstream has been created to become an example in this matter. Throughout its more than 100 years of history a proper mechanism to dispense justice has not been put in place and there is no desire or willingness to have such mechanism in place. Here those who exercise authority seem to have forgotten that the Holy Prophet (saw) has said that “the leader of the people is the servant of the people”. Under no circumstance can a leader use his position to abuse the people or to ride rough shod over them. You will be surprised to learn that in this twentieth century where thousands of books have been written about management and about how to make the best use of human resources one person came up with the idea of servant leadership. His name was Robert Greenleaf. In 1970 he wrote an essay entitled “the servant as leader”. It is a very interesting book. Those who can should read it. Among other things he said:

“The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first; perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions...The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature.”

“The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived?

In a second major essay, "The Institution as Servant" (1972), Greenleaf articulated what is often called the “credo.” There he said:

“This is my thesis: caring for persons, the more able and the less able serving each other, is the rock upon which a good society is built. Whereas, until recently, caring was largely per-

son to person, now most of it is mediated through institutions – often large, complex, powerful, impersonal; not always competent; sometimes corrupt. If a better society is to be built, one that is more just and more loving, one that provides greater creative opportunity for its people, then the most open course is to raise both the capacity to serve and the very performance as servant of existing major institutions by new regenerative forces operating within them.”

Although I read Greenleaf when I was in my forties, the above quotations have been freely borrowed from the internet. My point is that a Non Muslim can develop an idea to fully justify what our Holy Prophet(saw said). But we as Muslims find it hard to strive to put into practice what Allah has told us to do. This is a matter for reflection and we will speak more about the matter in the next Jumma incha Allah. May Allah help each one amongst us to understand His Deen as He expects us to understand it and may we be able to practice it to His Satisfaction.