

FRIDAY SERMON

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by Imam Zafrullah Domun

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

We are in the month of March and usually during this month we remind our brothers and sisters about some history of Jamaat Ahmadiyya. Usually we have been speaking of the history of the Jamaat in general. Today I hope to start speaking about the history of the Jamaat in Mauritius. Unfortunately we cannot give a full historical account of how the Jamaat started because all the details are unavailable and if they are in some documents somewhere, these documents are not available to me. Nonetheless I will *insha Allah* in the following sermons I will try to touch upon some aspects of the origin of Ahmadiyyat in Mauritius with some brief notes.

Most of us if not all are Muslim Ahmadis by birth. So we did not choose to become Ahmadis. So we did not have to do like the first generation of Ahmadis in Mauritius who studied and became convinced of the truthfulness of the message that the Promised Messiah brought and then they joined the Jamaat. Anyhow if today there is a Jamaat in Mauritius it is due to the efforts of these early Mauritian pioneer namely Noormohamed Noorooya and eventually his friend Azim Sooltangos, the grandfather of our bothers Dr Mahmood and Zahoor Sooltangos and Miajee Soobhan Rajabally who was the maternal uncle of Azim Sooltangos.

Today we will say a few words about Noormamode Noorooya. He was the head master of a government grant in aid school in Rose Hill better known as “L’ecole Nooraya”. That school was situated at the place where was situated the Cinema Hall behind the Atchia Arcades. At the beginning of the last century there were only about 40,000 Muslims in Mauritius. Noormamode Noorooya formed part of a group known as La Fraternité Musulmane. He said he first heard of Ahmadiyyat in 1907. He was the Editor of a newsletter/ paper known as “L’Islamisme”, the first edition of which was issued in November 1906. In his statement in court in 1919 he said that he had about 200 paid subscribers. From Liverpool in England a Muslim named Abdullah was issuing a magazine named “The Crescent” and they exchanged their papers. The editor of Review of Religion got the address of

“L’Islamisme” from the Crescent and sent the review here in Mauritius. This is how Ahmadiyyat came to Mauritius. Mr Noorooya spoke about the Ahmadiyya doctrine with his other friends and he even placed an advert in the May 2007 copy of his paper about the Review of Religion from Qadian . Once I went to the Mauritian archives and saw a copy of this paper. There are only three copies available over there. It was in his paper that Ahmadiyyat was first spoken about in Mauritius. He said that at that time no one objected to what was being said about Ahmadiyyat. As time went on he even reproduced whole articles from the Review of Religion in his paper. He said as he read these articles he became convinced of what Ahmadiyyat stood for. Thus he was the real pioneer. He became an Ahmadi in 1912/13 after a thorough search for truth. It was he who talked about the Ahmadiyya doctrine to the Atchia family in Rose Hill and the father of Major Atchia who was Hajee Ibrahim Atchia even told him that he had heard during Hajj that people were saying that the Mahdi would appear. He was the only person running a publication for the Muslims in Mauritius at that time. He also had published a booklet known as “Le petit Manuel du Musulman”. In fact Mr Noorooya was in contact with several leading Muslims of the time. The “Islamisme” stopped being published in 1914 with the start of the war. Later on he would publish another newsletter known as “La Revue Islamique”. He continued its publication for some time even after 1919.

There is an interesting paragraph in Mr Noorooya’s statement where he said that he had a high esteem for Molvi Sher Khan who was from Camp Diable. He considered him to be a learned man. When he spoke to him about the Ahmadiyya doctrine he did not make any objections at all and he even prayed with them when he came to Rose Hill up to the year 1914. But later in court the same Molvi would say that Ahmadiyyat was a horrible thing. It appears that his livelihood was at stake and that was the reason why he gave statements against the Ahmadiyya doctrines in court.

Furthermore he said that prior to the arrival of the Molvi Sufi Ghulam Mohammad there were other Ahmadis in Mauritius, namely Azime Sooltangos, government school teacher, Miajee Soobhan Rajabally the Imam of the mosque in phoenix, Mowlabux Bhunnoo, Goolam Tegally, Ibrahim Tegally, Saleh Atchia, Mamode Sadarally, Hosenally a teacher. In fact it was Mr. Noorooya and his two friends namely Mr Azim Soolangos and Miajee Soobhan Rajabally who wrote to Qadian and requested for a missionary to be sent to Mauritius. From this one can easily conclude that Jamaat Ahmadiyya did not start in Mauritius in 1915 with the arrival of Sufi Ghulam Muhammad sahib in 1915. Mr. Noorooya was the first Ahmadi

and he was the one who preached to others. Hence it is a falsification of history to celebrate the anniversary of hundred years of Ahmadiyyat in Mauritius this year. The message of Ahmadiyyat was not brought here through any missionary from Qadian. The message of Ahmadiyyat was brought here by Allah because he wanted this little island to be rightly guided. However we cannot gainsay that with the arrival of Sufi sahib Ahmadiyyat gained ground in Mauritius.

Another point worth mentioning is that Mr Noorooya was a caller to Allah. Wherever he went he spoke about Ahmadiyya doctrines and he went to many places on the island. At that time there were about 37 to 40 mosques on the island and he with Molvi Sufi Ghulam Mohammad went to many of them. According to his own statement when Molvi Sufi Ghulam Mohammad came the next day they went for Fajr prayer. They went to the mosque situated at Prince of Wales street because at that time Darus Salaam did not even exist. They prayed separately from the others who were in the mosque. However in the coming days and month several times it was Molvi Sufi Ghulam Mohammad who would officiate as Imam with the approval of the Miajee Ahmad and Hajee Ibrahim Atchia, the president. It so happened that in the course of time many of the Sunnis would stop coming to the mosque and only the Ahmadis would occupy it. A friction ensured. The Sunnis wanted the Ahmadis out. It was to achieve this purpose that in 1918 a case was lodged in court calling for their eviction. The case dragged on for about two years. Eventually the Non Ahmadis won the case and Ahmadis were asked to find their own place of worship. This judgment was given in November 1920 and Ahmadis built Dar us salaam mosque in 1923.

To the best of my knowledge I do not recall at all that I have ever heard a speech about the early days of the Jamaat in Mauritius as I have just explained. Unfortunately I do not have enough source materials because most of these are in Qadian and Rabwah. It is only if we have true source materials that a true history can be written if not we will have only biased history books. Incha Allah I will do some more research about the earliest days of the Jamaat here in Mauritius and will inform you of what I have learned as soon as I can.

Now I will speak about another matter. In his Friday sermon of 13 February last the Ahmadiyya caliph was speaking about a sermon of the second caliph and he made the following comments:

“It is through the sheer Grace of Allah Most high that we have joined the Jamaat of Hazrat Masih Maood (as) and that we are not influenced and we should not be influenced by those early traditions or traditions

that are devoid of wisdom. But we are not completely safe from them because people who have their own views join the Jamaat and sometimes on some points they fall into doubt and suspicion or they argue that it does not matter if such and such matter is interpreted in a different way. And sometimes newly arrived Ulemas interpret some matters according to their own thoughts although it is not forbidden and it should be so. But for these matters there are some principles. Anyhow because of such a mistake once again a mistaken point of view may be born. So to be safe from such a mistake Ulemas should present their views in subordination to khilafat and the administrative setup (*nizaam*) of the Jamaat. There is no doubt that by the Grace of Allah we are safe from wrong points of views or interpretations in general. But it is our duty to keep ourselves from error for ever. And we can do so only by keeping an eye on all the wrong interpretations given by non-Ahmadis in permanence, for it is by monitoring their views that we can protect ourselves from them and protect the Jamaat from shortcomings .”

The caliph wants people to understand and the Ulemas also to understand that their opinions on any matter should conform to the official line of the Jamaat. I can recall also that the second caliph also said that if somebody does not agree with the caliph he should discuss the points of disagreement with the caliph. However if he is not convinced he should not go about airing his opinion to others. Now I will share with you a quotation from Maulana Rumi who is well known around the world for his Masnavi and several other writings about Allah. He says:

Mohammed, the great Prophet, once said, “The worst of scholars are those who visit princes, and the best of princes are those who visit scholars. Wise is the prince who stands at the door of the poor, and wretched are the poor who stand at the door of the prince.” Now, taking the outward sense of these words, people think that scholars should never visit princes or they will become the worst of scholars. That is not the true meaning. Rather, the worst of scholars are those who depend upon princes, and who revolve their life and purpose around the attention and favor of princes. Such scholars take up learning in hopes that princes will give them presents, hold them in esteem, and promote them to office. Therefore, such scholars improve themselves and pursue knowledge on account of princes. They

become scholars from their fear of princes. They subject themselves to the princes' control. They conform themselves to the plans that princes map out for them. So, whether they visit a prince, or a prince visits them, still in every case they're the visitors, and it is the prince who is visited.

However, when scholars do not study to please princes, but instead pursue learning from first to last for the sake of truth—when their actions and words spring from the truth they have learned and put to use because this is their nature and they cannot live otherwise—just as fish can only thrive in water—such scholars subject themselves to the control and direction of God. They become blessed with the guidance of the prophets. Everyone living in their time is touched by them and derives inspiration from their example, whether they are aware of the fact or not.

Should such scholars visit a prince, they are still the ones visited and the prince is the visitor, because in every case it is the prince who takes from these scholars and receives help from them. Such scholars are independent of the prince. They are like the light-giving sun, whose whole function is giving to all, universally, converting stones into rubies and carnelians, changing mountains into mines of copper, gold, silver and iron, making the earth fresh and green, bringing fruit to the trees, and warmth to the breeze. Their trade is giving, they do not receive. The Arabs have expressed this in a proverb: "We have learned in order to give, we have not learned in order to take." And so in all ways they are the visited, and the prince is the visitor."(The discourses of Rumi)

So I wonder whether the caliph himself should not give an attentive ear to what those who possess knowledge really have to say instead of just saying that we are Jamaat Ahmadiyya and we can never be wrong in our beliefs or practices as his predecessor said. If there is no open debate how can we say that people are being helped to deeply search for truth rather than just the official line of reasoning. Open debate in a civilized manner is a sure way to arrive at truth in any matter. Allah knows best.