

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

Today is the 1st of May and it is best remembered as Labour Day around the world. There is a background to this celebration which many are not at all aware of but which I think everyone should know. These days the official number of hours that a worker should put in daily is eight hours. In Mauritius it is a 45 hour week but in many advanced countries it is less. In some it is 40 hours and in France for example it is around thirty five. But this has not been the case always. In many countries during the 19th century and even before, workers worked almost twelve hours in mines and factories and they were being paid a pittance. Labour unions have been fighting for the reduction of daily Labour hours for a long time but legislation to implement it came only by the end of the last century in America and eventually several other countries around the world. With the creation of the socialist movement in 1848 with the launching of the communist manifesto by Marx and Engels the International Socialist movement started campaigning for the reduction of the number of working hours. In the USA in Chicago on 4th May 1886 the police were trying to disperse a public assembly during a general strike for the eight-hour workday, when an unidentified person threw a bomb at the police. The police responded by firing on the workers, killing four demonstrators. By 1887 Labor Day was recognized as a public holiday but it was not celebrated on the first of May but rather on the first Monday in September. But in other countries it would take more time and after much campaigning eventually the 1st of May would be celebrated as Labour Day.

Here in Mauritius our grandparents had to wait for another fifty years before the first of May was celebrated for the first time as a public holiday in Mauritius in May 1950, thanks largely to the efforts of Guy Rozemont, Dr. Maurice Curé, Pandit Sahadeo and Emmanuel Anquetil. Since their arrival in Mauritius the Indian laborers were mistreated. In 1941, Major Granville Orde Browne, the Labour Adviser to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, was sent by the Colonial Office to investigate the social and economic conditions of labourers in Mauritius, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Malaya (modern-day Malaysia). He reported that that the wages of sugar estate laborers had remained almost unchanged for many years and that the output per labourer was lower because of malnutrition, lack of medical care and poor health condition. In his report, he made it clear that the colony had a poorly paid, undernourished and sickly population which was only able to achieve a limited amount of work. Eventually legislation would be introduced to improve the conditions

of the laborers in Mauritius and the first Labour Day would be celebrated in 1950. It is imperative that our youngsters are made aware of the struggle of their elders to help them to enjoy some privileges that they take for granted. As I have repeated often our youngsters should educate themselves about the history of our country and also about the history of the labour movement here and elsewhere. It is only then that one can appreciate the worth of our politicians of today compared to those who struggled in the beginning to improve our material condition of life.

So when you pray to Allah “ *Rabbe awzeni an ashkora nematakallati anamta alayya wa ala waledayya wa an amala swalehan tarzaahou wa aslehli fi zourriati inni toubto elayka wa inni menal mouslemeen* ” meaning “ My Lord grant me that I may be grateful for Thy favours which thou hast bestowed upon me and upon my parents , and that I may do such righteous deeds as may please Thee. And establish righteousness among my progeny for me. I do turn to thee and I am of those who submit to Thee.”(46:16), remember the favours for which this day is being commemorated. As a believer it is incumbent upon us to remind ourselves of all the favours that we enjoy. This increases our gratefulness to Allah and it should develop in us qualities like humility. These were a few words that I wanted to share with you in connection with the celebration of Labour Day.

Now I will come back to the second condition of *bay'at* about which we started talking since last week. The second condition of *bay'at* specifically spells out some sins in which an Ahmadi Muslim should not indulge. Last week we spoke about falsehood and adultery. Today we will start by speaking about the need to “lower the gaze.” Without going into specifics each man and woman who is mature can easily understand what the meaning of lowering the eyes is. Islamic teachings cut at the root of evil. It aims at not letting it develop. Allah is our Creator and He knows all the promptings of our soul. He knows also how we can protect ourselves from evil and His instructions in the Holy Quran is for our own benefit. These days new means have been created where the gaze can freely roam. The internet with whatever is available on it can give a feast to your eyes and damage your soul without your knowing it. There are plenty of really good things on the internet but you should know how to choose. There are some very interesting hadiths about this matter. It is reported that the Holy Prophet (saw) said: ‘Fire is forbidden to touch the eye that remains awake for the sake of Allah, and fire is forbidden on the eye that sheds tears for the fear of Allah.’ Although this hadith is not specifically speaking about the need to lower the gaze, yet it is speaking about good deeds relating to the eyes. The first one is to pray at night and the second speaks about a consciousness of Allah that brings tears to your eyes. The second hadith is more relevant “ ‘Fire is forbidden on that eye which,

instead of watching, is cast down when confronted with something that Allah has forbidden to see, and fire is also forbidden to touch the eye that has been taken out in the way of Allah the Glorious.’ In another hadith “The Prophet (saw) said, “O Ali, do not follow a glance with another glance. As the first is not against you and the second is against you”. This hadith means that because men and women freely mix it is unavoidable for their glances to meet. When that happens one has to lower the gaze and not continue to lock the glances. In another hadith he said “There is no Muslim who sees the beauty of a woman then lowers his gaze except Allah creates worship for him whose pleasure he finds.” This is an interesting hadith and I advise you all men to try to experience its veracity. There are plenty other hadiths related to this matter but we will leave them for the time being. We will end on this matter by the following hadith:

Ubadah Bin As-Samit (ra) narrates that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) said: ‘Assure me of six things concerning you, and I will assure your entry into Paradise:

- When you speak, say the truth.
- When you make a promise, fulfil it.
- When you are given a trust, convey it when demanded. [There should be no excuses.]
- Safeguard your private parts.
- Keep your eyes cast down.
- Hold your hands from cruelty.’

(*Musnadu Ahmad bin Hanbal*)

May Allah enable each one amongst us to reflect upon these hadiths and to practice them to the best of our abilities.

Speaking about this matter Hazrat Masih Maood (as) tells us:

“The Holy Qur’an, which lays down appropriate directions with reference to the natural desires and weaknesses of man, has adopted an excellent course in this regard: “Direct the believing men to restrain their looks and to guard their *furuji*. That is the act through which they will attain purification.” *Furuji* does not refer merely to the private parts. It refers to all parts of the entry in the body including the ears. It has been prohibited to hear the song of an unrelated woman. Remember, it is proven by hundreds of experiments, that if God prohibits something, man has to leave it sooner or later.” (*Malfuzat*, vol. 7, p. 135)

At another place he says:

“Islam has enjoined men and women equally on the observations of these conditions. As women are prescribed to wear the veil, so too are men commanded to keep their eyes down. *Salat* [obligatory Prayer], fasting, *Zakat* [obligatory alms], *Hajj*

[Pilgrimage to the House of God in Mecca], the distinction between *halal* [lawful] and *haram* [unlawful], avoiding un-Islamic customs to honour God's commandment, are all injunctions that make the door of Islam very narrow and that is why everyone cannot enter this door. (*Malfuzat*, new edition, vol. 5. p. 614)

What he says here calls for some reflection. It is true that we live between restrictions and allowances. It is up to us to try our best to follow the prescriptions of the Holy Quran in order to get our own salvation. Only those who are humble in spirit will be able to enter the door through which Islam calls us. We all need to fulfill all the obligations that have been imposed upon us. Unfortunately we are attracted by what is material. To some extent they are useful and helpful in our life on earth. But it is incumbent upon us to transcend the material and try to know more about Allah. That should be the supreme goal of anyone joining the fold of Jamaat Ahmadiyya.

Then we have the following extract from "The philosophy of the teachings of Islam":

The Promised Messiah^(as) says:

"God Almighty has not only set forth excellent teachings for acquiring the quality of chastity, but has furnished man with five remedies against unchaste behavior. These are [1] to restrain one's eyes from gazing upon women who are outside the prohibited degrees, [2] to safeguard the ears from listening to their voices, [3] to refrain from listening to the stories about them, [4] to avoid occasions that might furnish incitement towards this vice, and [5] to control oneself during the period of celibacy through fasting, dieting, etc...

We can confidently claim that this excellent teaching with all its devices that is set forth in the Holy Qur'an is peculiar to Islam. It should be kept in mind that as the natural condition of man, which is the source of his passions, is such that he cannot depart from it without a complete change in himself; his passions are bound to be roused when they are confronted with the occasion and opportunity for indulging in this vice; therefore, God Almighty has not instructed us that we might freely gaze at women outside the prohibited degrees and might contemplate their beauty and observe all their movements in dancing, etc., but that we should do so with pure looks. Nor have we been instructed to listen to the singing of these women and to lend an ear to the tales of their beauty, but that we should do so with a pure intent. We have been positively commanded not to look at their beauty whether with pure intent or otherwise, nor to listen to their musical voices or to descriptions of their good looks, whether with pure intent or otherwise. We have been directed to eschew all this as we eschew carrion, so that we should not stumble. It is almost certain that our free glances would cause us to stumble some time or another.

As God Almighty desires that our eyes and our hearts and all our limbs and organs should continue to be in a state of purity, He has furnished us with this excellent teaching. There can be no doubt that unrestrained looks become a source of danger. If we place soft bread before a hungry dog, it would be vain to hope that the dog should pay no attention to it. Thus, God Almighty desired that human faculties not be provided with any occasion for secret functioning and not be confronted with anything that might incite dangerous tendencies.”

May Allah help each one amongst us to live up to the ideals that Jamaat Ahmadiyya stands for and may we triumph through our good example to win the heart of others to these same ideals *incha* Allah.