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Subject Matter:

The New Year is not a festival for Muslims

New year Festivities and Muslims - We should not imitate others - Continuous trouble in Muslim Lands - Incident in Ahmadiyya Mosque in Bangladesh - Hadiths about Allah's Mercy to His servants - Brief story of Ibrahim of Adham - Who is a real Slave? - What is Spiritual Beauty - The light that Allah has promised those who fear Him.

As from today we are entering a new solar year. From the Islamic point of view this day has no particular importance at all. It is a day like any other. However we live in a country which was colonized by the British since 1810 until 1968 when we got our independence from them. Celebrating the new year and before that Christmas is a cultural remnant that we have inherited from them. In fact on the country level there is nothing special that is done except that maybe the special messages that are given by the President and the Prime Minister of the country. As far as the bulk of the population is concerned people go on a shopping spree and they purchase gifts and food for their dear ones and they revel till quite late at night especially on the last day of the year.

As far as we Muslims are concerned, we should try to avoid all these reveling and merry making. We should try to show by our own actions that we do not just follow what others are doing in order not to feel embarrassed. As good Muslims we should be clear on what we stand. If the Holy Prophet (saw) has said that we have only two Festivals we should be content with that and not copy what others do. As good Muslims we should be concerned with the way we live our own lives. We should be doing our best to try to obey Allah and His Prophet (saw) as best as we can in all matters as far as possible. We should try to avoid all types of innovation. In some quarters some Muslims stay awake until midnight on the 31st December listening to the radio or watching Tv or just chatting among themselves or lighting fire crackers, just imitating others. Then they go to pray two *nafil* prayers and this has become a sort of practice amongst themselves. If one does two

rakaat prayers just to have good conscience, such a practice has no root in Islam. However if someone is used to wake up to pray at midnight and he does it on the 1st day of the year as well there is nothing wrong in his practice. To wrap up on this matter I would like to say that we should do our best to understand what good Islamic practices are and maintain them and refrain from imitating others as far as we can. May Allah make each day of the year as long as we live filled with what is good and pleasing to Him incha Allah.

These days the Islamic world in the Middle East and in part of Africa are going through very difficult times. There are wars, calamities, accidents due to human negligence, incompetent leaders, plenty of refugees fleeing their own country, falling of oil prices which has created a great dent in income especially in Opec countries and corruption as well. One might wonder how come so many problems are plaguing the Muslim world for so long a time. Yet Allah has said in the Holy Quran “*wa laa takenou wa laa tahzanou wa antoumoul a’lawna in kountoum mo’meneen*” meaning “Slacken not nor grieve; you shall have the upper hand if you are believers”(3:140). Arab people have wealth that Allah has graced them with but yet their people are not living in ease. Their whole world is in turmoil and this has been going on for some years now. Despite all the efforts of the International community it does not seem that there is an end in sight for the Muslims living in some countries in the Middle East. Let us remember them in our prayers and also remember Ahmadis who are also suffering in some parts of the world. I do not know if you are aware that last Friday ISIS has claimed responsibility for the attack by a suicide bomber on an Ahmadiyya mosque in Bagmara, 150 miles from Dhaka in Bangladesh. Fortunately there were only about 100 worshippers in the mosque and when the suicide bomber activated his belt he managed to kill himself and injured only 3 worshippers. The Jamaat’s leadership has to find better ways to keep Ahmadis safe at least in the mosques. There are plenty of things that can be done provided there is a will to do anything. Moreover I have a feeling that such attacks would be repeated elsewhere and the Jamaat needs to be more vigilant.

Now I will share with you some hadiths where we will have an opportunity to reflect on the wisdom of our beloved Prophet Mohammad (saw).

It is reported from Hudhaifa that, "I also heard him saying, 'From among the people preceding your generation, there was a man whom the angel of death visited to capture his soul. (So his soul was captured) and he was asked if he had done any good deed.' He replied, 'I don't remember any good deed.' He was asked to think it over. He said, 'I do not remember, except that I used to trade with the people in the world and I used to give a respite to the rich and forgive the poor (among my debtors). So Allah made him enter Paradise.'" From this hadith we learn that Allah will be very Gracious to His Servants. He would always find something to save them. He is not eager to punish us. On the contrary He has created us so that we might worship Him and so He is ever eager to save us. In all circumstances of life we should keep in mind Allah's generosity and appeal to His generosity instead of thinking that we have any capacity. We should do our best and leave the rest to Him.

The hadith continues: Hudhaifa further said, "I also heard him saying, 'Once there was a man on his death-bed, who, losing every hope of surviving said to his family: When I die, gather for me a large heap of wood and make a fire (to burn me). When the fire eats my meat and reaches my bones, and when the bones burn, take and crush them into powder and wait for a windy day to throw it (i.e. the powder) over the sea. They did so, but Allah collected his particles and asked him: Why did you do so? He replied: For fear of You. So Allah forgave him."

Here we see someone who for fear of Allah thought that he could escape Allah. But Allah is all Powerful and since He has said that we would be raised up after death, He raised that man and it was His fear of Allah which saved him. Ultimately it is Allah who will decide our fate in the hereafter because He knows what is in our heart of heart. He knows exactly what is there. If there is hypocrisy He is aware of it. If there is Faith He is aware of it. He knows everything and He is the master who will decide the fate of His slaves.

Speaking of slaves I recall something that I recently read about Ibrahim of Adham. He is a well-known Sufi. Ebrahim ibn Adham's saintly career began in the following manner. He was king of Balkh, and a whole world was under his command; forty gold swords and forty gold maces were carried before and behind him. One night he was asleep on his royal couch. At

midnight the roof of the apartment vibrated, as if someone was walking on the roof.

“Who is there?” he shouted.

“A friend,” came the reply. “I have lost a camel, and am searching for it on this roof.” “Fool, do you look for the camel on the roof?” cried Ibrahim. “Heedless one,” answered the voice, “do you seek for God in silken clothes, asleep on a golden couch?” His story is quite long. We will leave it here. But you can read it in a translation of “*Tazkiratoul awliah*” by J Arbery on page 66. So he tells us about the characteristics of a slave. He said:

“Once I bought a slave,” Ebrahim recalled.

““What is your name?’ I asked.

““What you call me,’ he answered.

““What do you eat?’

““What you give me.’

““What do you wear?’

““What you clothe me withal.’

““What do you do?’

““What you command.’

““What do you desire?’ I asked.

““What has a servant to do with desire?’ he replied.

““Wretch that you are,’ I said to myself, ‘all your life you have been a servant of God. Well, now learn what it means to be a servant!’

“And I wept so long that I swooned away.”

This was a man who understood what it means to be an “Abdullah” literally slave of Allah. If we think about this story we will learn a lot and we may wonder how far we are a true slave of Allah.

Now we will read an extract from the writings of the Promised Messiah where he speaks about righteousness. He says:

“The spiritual beauty of man is to walk along all the finer ways of righteousness. They are the attractive features of spiritual beauty. It is obvious that to be mindful of the trusts of God Almighty, and to fulfil all the covenants of faith, and to employ all faculties and limbs both overt, like eyes and ears and hands and feet and others like them, and those that are covert, like the mind and other faculties and qualities, on their proper occasions and to restrain them from coming into action on improper occasions, and to be warned against the subtle attacks of vice and to be mindful of the rights of one’s fellow beings, is the way of perfecting one’s spiritual beauty. God Almighty has in the Holy Qur’an designated righteousness as a raiment. *Libas-ut-taqwa* is an expression of the Holy Qur’an. This is an indication that spiritual beauty and spiritual ornament are achieved through righteousness. Righteousness means that one must be mindful even of the smallest details of the Divine trusts and covenants and also of all the trusts and covenants of one’s fellow beings, as far as it may be possible. That is, one must try to fulfil, to the best of one’s ability, all the requirements in their minutest details. **[Brahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Part V, Ruhani Khaza’in, vol. 21, pp. 209-210]**

He further says:

“True righteousness and ignorance cannot subsist together. True righteousness is accompanied by a light, as God the Glorious, has said:

“Yaa ayyohallazina amanou in tattaqoullaha yaj’allakoum fourqanaan wa yokaffir ankoum sayye’aatekoum wa yaj’al lakoum nouran tamshouna behi”
(57:29)

That is, O ye who believe, if you remain steadfast in righteousness and hold fast to it for the sake of Allah, with firmness and perseverance, He will single you out from among your detractors with marked distinction. That is, you shall be blessed with a light which will accompany you wherever you go. That is to say, that that light would illumine all their actions and words and faculties and senses. Their intellect would be illumined and there would be light in all that they utter. There would be light in their eyes and in their ears and in their tongues and in their speech and in all their movements. The ways along which they walk would be lit up. All their ways, the ways of their faculties and their senses will be filled with light, and they will walk

altogether in light. [**A'ina-e-Kamalat-e-Islam, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 5, pp. 177-178**]

So as good Ahmadi Muslims we should strive to do our best to understand what our religious obligations are and strive to accomplish them in the best possible way so that Allah may be pleased with each one amongst us. I keep repeating this that Allah is a great treasure. We live in order to know Him and understand His ways and fulfill all our obligations towards Him and other human beings to the best of our capacity. May Allah help each one amongst us fulfill our mission as a good Muslim incha Allah.