**April 15 1915**

**Honor the Pledge of Keeping Religion Above the World**

**(*The purpose of family relations, equitable treatment, and charitable spending is to guard against evil*)**

I bear witness that none deserves to be served besides Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the servant and messenger of Allah. —

After this, I seek the protection of Allah from the accursed devil.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.



“There is no blame on you if you divorce women while yet you have not touched them, nor appointed for them a portion. And provide for them, the wealthy according to his means and the straitened according to his means, a provision according to usage. (This is) a duty on the doers of good.” (2:236)



“And if you divorce them before you have touched them and you have appointed for them a portion, (pay) half of what you have appointed unless they forgo or he forgoes in whose hand is the marriage tie. And it is nearer to dutifulness that you forgo. Nor neglect the giving of free gifts between you. Surely Allah is Seer of what you do.” (2:237)



“Guard the prayers and the most excellent prayer, and stand up truly obedient to Allah.” (2:238)



“But if you are in danger (say your prayers) on foot or on horseback. And when you are secure, remember Allah as He has taught you what you knew not.” (2:239)



“And those of you who die and leave wives behind, should make a bequest in favour of their wives of maintenance for a year without turning (them) out. Then if they themselves go away, there is no blame on you for what they do of lawful deeds concerning themselves. And Allah is Mighty, Wise.” (2:240)



“And for the divorced women, provision (must be made) in kindness. This is incumbent on those who have regard for duty.” (2:241)



“Allah thus makes clear to you His messages that you may understand.” (2:242)

This section of the Holy Quran continues a discussion on the same subject referred to in the previous section. The first reference discusses situations when a divorce occurs before the consummation of marriage and the dowry has not been decided. Under these circumstances the Holy Quran states:

“There is no blame on you if you divorce women while yet you have not touched them, nor appointed for them a portion. And provide for them, the wealthy according to his means and the straitened according to his means, a provision according to usage. (This is) a duty on the doers of good.”

**If the Dowry has been Fixed and Consummation has not Occurred**

“And if you divorce them before you have touched them and you have appointed for them a portion, (pay) half of what you have appointed unless they forgo or he forgoes in whose hand is the marriage tie. And it is nearer to dutifulness that you forgo. Nor neglect the giving of free gifts between you. Surely Allah is Seer of what you do.”

The Holy Quran also says: “Men are the maintainers of women with what Allah has made some of them excel others and with what they spend out of their wealth…” (4:34)

These two circumstances of divorce are described here. The words used relative to divorce are: “And provide for them, the wealthy according to his means and the straitened according to his means, a provision according to usage. (This is) a duty on the doers of good.”

The doing of good under these circumstances is a great challenge because with divorce, all ties of the relationship are cut off. The marital bond excels by its very nature. A bond is established with an outsider in lieu of relations with parents and other relatives. In spite of this degree and intensity of relationship, with a divorce taking place, a complete severance of ties occurs. Even after a divorce, relations with other relatives are maintained to some degree, but this does not happen to be the case between the divorced couple. Even under these circumstances, the doing of good is emphasized. This is a situation in which a marriage contract was made but no relationship was established and consummation of the marriage did not occur. Even under these exceptional circumstances, when the relationship has not even been fully established, the Holy Quran advises:

“…And provide for them, the wealthy according to his means and the straitened according to his means, a provision according to usage. (This is) a duty on the doers of good.” (2:236)

This shows how much the Holy Quran stresses the doing of good upon Muslims. Discussing the very same subject of divorce, the Holy Quran states: “Let him who has abundance spend out of his abundance, and whoever has his means of subsistence straitened to him, let him spend out of that which Allah has given him”. (65:7)

Why was the doing of good stressed? What is the purpose behind this? Is the purpose of the Holy Quran only that your life at home should be facilitated? The real goal in itself is not this. These matters of divorce, this making and breaking of covenants, all this has another objective. The real purpose of the Holy Quran is to stress the importance of doing one’s duty and abstaining from evil. This is why repeatedly we are reminded of this real purpose: that Allah the Most High wants you to be those who keep their duty.

**Spending in the Way of Allah**

In this section, and further on, the subject for which this section has been put here is elaborated. Its purpose is to teach Muslims to spend in the way of Allah. In order to develop this spirit, it is essential to comply with these injunctions. This is the reason why, after mentioning these injunctions, the lesson given is:

“Nor neglect the giving of free gifts between you.”

By learning these minor details, acquire the greater knowledge and wisdom that is intended. The Holy Quran tells you to spend even on the woman whose relation with you has been completely severed. I am asking you, isn’t your connection with Islam even at the level of this divorced woman, with whom you are told to deal with goodness in spite of the severance of relationship? It is my observation that when a call is put forth to spend for the cause of religion, the standard reply is that we do not have enough to meet our own needs. Alas! Islam tells you to spend even on the divorced woman and you refuse to give, for this very same religion that you claim to be your most valuable asset. The Holy Quran has given you many excellent lessons of knowledge and wisdom. Is this not its great beneficence? It enjoins us to spend even for causes that do not have a direct connection with us. In spite of having such an important bond with Islam, if you say, “wherefrom should we spend?” then I am telling you that you have not understood Islam.

**The Example of the Companions of the Holy Prophet**

Look at the condition of those people who joined the Holy Prophet. How much wealth did they have and what were the means to fulfill their needs? One of them would go and perform manual labor all day. With the meager wages he would earn, after keeping the bare minimum for his sustenance, he would give the rest to the Holy Prophet. These were the same people who supported Islam under very difficult circumstances and brought it to us. If instead of them, there were people like us who make tall claims but practically do nothing, Islam would not have spread in the world. See the strength of other religions and the great difficulties and dangers Islam is facing. People of other faiths work very hard and are fully devoted to the propagation of their religions. Compare the number of Muslims who have undertaken this responsibility.

There are also significant numbers who are abandoning Islam in favor of other religions. All of you are prepared to accumulate worldly benefits and wealth and each one of you is in pursuit of some material benefit. How many, I ask, are ready for the cause of Islam? In which corner of the world are Islamic missionaries working and preparing to spread the knowledge of Islam? People spend in the hundreds to safeguard their assets. If someone breaks into their property, they take elaborate measures to protect it. Islam is being shattered by numerous break-ins and thousands of precious jewels (people) have been lost from its treasury. How many are there whose hearts grieve for this loss and who unconditionally come to its aid? In these verses, Allah has enjoined you to come to the aid of Islam. If you want to do good, then sacrifice your needs and give priority to your concern for Islam.

**Finding Excuses not to Spend in the Way of Allah**

Some people have come up with the excuse that no one has come to them asking for help. They should ponder upon the example of a woman who has to cook for the household. Is she concerned about discharging her responsibility or does she wait to cook only if someone asks her to do so? Your dependency on being asked by someone to give indicates that your hearts are devoid of the passion and the feeling to give spontaneously. Is it not your own responsibility to come to the aid of Islam without being asked to do so? Why then do you need to wait for someone to come and ask you to make your donations? Some people promise large sums for donations and promise to give monthly contributions but thereafter come up with the excuse that no one has come to ask them to fulfill their pledges. Is this the feeling and sympathy they hold in their hearts for Islam? Is this helping Islam or a mere show of giving.

If your giving is such that it needs asking, then I am telling you it does not make any difference whether you give or you do not give. Pretentious giving never bears any fruit. Just a few days ago, a friend made an appeal that some members should purchase the footnotes of the Holy Quran in larger quantities and distribute them free. I was concerned that if people accept or promise a donation for this purpose because of my presence, it may be regarded as pretentious behavior. In order to save them from this predicament, I promised to distribute a hundred copies myself. When you have to give and it is for God, then let it be only for Him. Do not bring people into this equation. This will make you deserving of real rewards.

**The Significance of the Verse of the Most Excellent Prayer**

The Holy Quran then states: “Guard the prayers and the most excellent prayer, and stand up truly obedient to Allah.” People have had great difficulty explaining the connection of this verse with the rest of the subject matter. Some consider this injunction redundant to the rest of the discussion. This position however, is incorrect. Careful examination reveals that it highlights the real purpose and objective that is only hinted at in the previous verse. There is no doubt that the Holy Quran is not a book in which each subject is classified into separate chapters and sections where the subject matter of one section does not fall into the next. This sort of arrangement would be expected in a book whose purpose is to prepare you to learn about different subjects. The purpose of the Holy Quran is for you to develop a perfect relationship with Allah the Most High. That is the reason why during the discussion of a specific subject, constant reminders are given to guard against the accountability of Allah. The same message is given here in these words: “Guard the prayers and the most excellent prayer, and stand up truly obedient to Allah.” What is the purpose of prayer? If you look carefully, you will come to the conclusion that prayer is the root of all progress and success. How well the truthful messenger, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, has expressed this by calling prayer the *mehraj* or spiritual ascension of the believer.

Before the advent of Islam, every nation had the seventh day of the week dedicated to prayer when all worldly connections were forbidden. Islam, however, commands us to keep our mind focused on the attributes of Allah the Most High throughout our daily occupations. Islam taught us the practical lesson of having our hands tied in our worldly pursuits, but our heart should be always bonded in friendship with Allah. If the purpose of religion is to form a bond with Allah, then there is no other means of doing this besides prayer. There is no timing of obligatory prayers when one is not busy either doing something or resting. Under all circumstances, whether one is involved in some activity or on break, the priceless practical means to sacrifice all of this for a strong relationship with Allah has been taught by Islam through the institution of prayer.

**The Prayerful Derided as Evildoers**

Some people are of the opinion that those who pray are usually the evildoers; hence one should be on guard against them. There is no doubt that some have made ill use of their prayers to accomplish illegitimate tasks, but you should not forget the truth. If someone says his prayer and then commits evil, it does not prove that his evil deed is the result of his prayer. It is his own devious mind that he has used in a sinister manner to commit the evil deed. You know the true purpose of prayers and should set an excellent example by practicing your prayers through righteousness.

Observe how many occupations have been unable to stop people from misusing them in an unwholesome manner. Take for example the legal profession. Many lawyers undertake this profession and set a very bad example by using their legal expertise for illegal gain. How many people are there who stop from becoming lawyers when they witness these bad examples? It is quite obvious that no one even considers this. A truly noble soul is the one who ignores the bad example of others and performs a task in an excellent manner and sets a good example. Thus, we observe both types of people: those who perform a task and manifest a good example, while there are others who misuse the same task for illegitimate gain. Does this mean that by seeing their evil example we should give up the thought of doing and accomplishing good?

By bringing the subject of prayer into the discussion of divorce, the Holy Quran has shown us that a deep relationship exists between the two. The matter of divorce is a very important and sensitive subject. The pleasure of Allah should particularly be sought under these circumstances by praying with humility so that any action that might affect the perfect bond with Allah and provoke His displeasure should be avoided. In order to maintain the higher bond between man and God, one has to manifest caution in severing the lesser tie of marriage while safeguarding the rights of others.

**What Kind of Prayer is Enjoined**

Prayer does not mean fulfilling a few rituals, for the Holy Quran enjoins: “stand up truly obedient to Allah.” Stand up in your prayer with true obedience to Allah and avoid actions evident of disobedience. Manifest complete submission and guard your prayers in a manner that does not falter under any circumstances. If there were to be a circumstance in which prayer was not mandatory, then it would have been when one is in a state of fear. This is not so. In fact the Quran tells us: “But if you are in danger (say your prayers) on foot or on horseback.” How pure are these teachings of the Holy Quran and what a remarkable distinction they hold in comparison with other scriptures. Jesus prayed for the daily bread and Christians still follow this tradition. Even during the recent war, a constant supply of food and beverages was maintained. You might have heard of this or seen pictures of it in the news where food and tea was being served while the troops were on the march. This shows the degree of concern they have about physical sustenance. Compare this with the excellence of the Islamic teachings. Man always is concerned about his next meal; therefore no mention is made of it. It was essential even under these conditions, to maintain a relationship with Allah, thus showing the wisdom behind the injunction to keep up prayers while in danger, on foot or on horseback. This is what clearly distinguishes Islam from other religions. While others lay great stress on physical rituals, Islam caters to the higher teachings of spirituality even in trivial matters and does not part with this superior motive even within the framework of social and cultural interactions of man. Islam teaches a Muslim to ask “guide us on the right path,” while other religions teach, “Lord give us our daily bread.”

**Keep your Pledge with Allah to, “Hold Religion Above the World”**

I ask you again, why do you seek worldly gain? You should embrace the teachings of your mentor. There are those who strive for the world and become of it. Is it not possible for you to practically uphold your religion above the world? The Holy Quran enjoins this not only in a state of fear and danger but also when there is peace: “And when you are secure, remember Allah as He has taught you what you knew not.” Under these circumstances, you should resume your normal prayer schedule. Therefore I am telling you that you should fully safeguard your prayers whether you are in a state of fear or at peace. I acquit my duty by telling you that your organization will only make progress through prayer and only prayer will be the source of your well-being.

“And those of you who die and leave wives behind, should make a bequest in favour of their wives of maintenance for a year without turning (them) out…” (2:240)

This injunction is not mandatory nor does it abrogate any other commandment. “Without turning them out,” means you should not turn them out if there is a bequest to maintain them for a year. “Then if they themselves go away, there is no blame on you for what they do of lawful deeds concerning themselves.” This refers to circumstances when they choose to leave and get married.

Toward this end, once more we are told: “And for the divorced women, provision (must be made) in kindness. This is incumbent on those who have regard for duty.”

Again keeping of one’s duty, recognition of the rights of others, and fear of the accountability to Allah is stressed once more.

“Allah thus makes clear to you His messages that you may understand.” (2:242)

**Prayer for the Progress of Islam**

It is said that prayers find great acceptance on the day of *Jumuah* (Friday). Keeping this in mind, I will recite a prayer and all of you say Amen with me.

“O Allah help those who help the religion of Muhammad (peace an blessings of Allah be upon him) and make me of them and disappoint those who disgrace the religion of Muhammad (peace an blessings of Allah be upon him) and do not make us of those.”

*After this, Maulana Muhammad Ali repeatedly recited this prayer along with other supplications. He concluded the sermon with:*

May Allah accept all of these prayers and give me, members of my organization, and all Muslims the capability to follow this pure guidance so that the world can see clearly the genuine and blessed face of Islam. Amen