**April 21, 1916**

**The Persistent Striving and Preservation of Civil Rights and Responsibilities Guarantees the Survival of a Nation.**

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.



“O people, keep your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind), and spread from these two many men and women. And keep your duty to Allah, by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship. Surely Allah is ever a Watcher over you.” (4:1)

This chapter is called *Al-Nisa*, which means ‘The Women’. The reason for this name is that it discusses the rights and responsibilities of women and informs us of the rights and responsibilities of men and women toward each other. This chapter discusses social intercourse. Preceding this in *Al-Baqarah* and *Al-Imran* different aspects of how to preserve a nation’s existence were explained. Social intercourse and its different facets are now discussed. We are told how we can coexist and maintain mutual relationships. This subject is expanded upon in the next chapter, which discusses broader aspects of civil intercourse. In this manner, these four chapters bring this subject to completion.

**Response to Those who are Critical of the Arrangement of the Holy Quran**

People object that the Holy Quran is just a collection of chapters randomly put together. Some Muslims may also hold this view, but it is a very flawed concept. There is such an excellent arrangement in the verses of the Holy Quran that the more we consider it, the more we become aware of the profound knowledge and wisdom involved. The chapter, *Al-Baqarah* is at the very beginning, preceded only by the *Al-Fatihah*, the essence of the Holy Quran. In *Al-Fatihah*, guidance toward the right path is sought, while the first section of *Al-Baqarah* outlines that path of success for us.

**The Beginning and End of a Chapter**

Another wonderful aspect of this arrangement is that the subject matter at the beginning of a chapter is also discussed toward the end. For example, in *Al-Baqarah*, success and final triumph of the believers was discussed in the beginning of the chapter and the closing words relate to the same subject in the form of a prayer: “so grant us victory over the disbelieving people.” Similarly, in the chapter *Al-Imran*, the introduction deals with the topic of Christianity and the chapter concludes with the same. This chapter called *Al-Nisa* (The Women) begins with a discussion of women’s rights and concludes with the words, “If a man dies and he has no son and he has a sister” again referring to the subject of women’s rights. The purpose of my discussion is to point out the wonderful manner whereby every chapter of the Holy Quran begins with a certain subject, discusses its various ramifications in detail, and concludes with a summary of the same topic.

**The Important Subject of Life and Death of Nations**

Another amazing aspect is the mutual connectivity and arrangement that exists among the various chapters of the Holy Quran. The most relevant question before a nation is whether it lives on or it dies. There is extensive debate on this subject today about what needs to be prioritized in this matter. Allah the Most High has told us by putting *Al-Baqarah* in the beginning of the Holy Quran that the subject of life and death of nations is of prime importance. The whole of *Al-Baqarah* discusses how dead nations are brought to life and cites in a very elegant manner the example of the children of Israel.

**The Life and Death of the Children of Israel**

In *Al-Baqarah*, the Holy Quran states,



“Hast thou not considered those who went (*kharaju*) forth from their homes, and they were thousands, for fear of death. Then Allah said to them, die. Then He gave them life. Surely Allah is Gracious to people, but most people are not grateful.” (2:243)

The use of the Arabic word *kharaju* (exodus) in this context clearly refers to the nation that is mentioned in the book of exodus in the Bible. *i.e.* The children of Israel. They escaped the tyranny of the pharaoh with Prophet Moses, and then wandered for forty years in the wilderness. This was their state of death, from which they were brought back to life and given ownership of the Holy Land. The life and death of a nation and the factors influencing it are therefore a question of prime importance.

**The Cause of Muslim Downfall**

A major cause for the downfall of the Muslims, is their neglect of this very important duty and the fact that they did not make an effort to increase their numerical strength. Allah the Most High had shown them the way in these words of the Holy Quran:

“And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. And these are they who are successful.” (3:104)

This was the golden principle for revival of the nation. Alas! Muslims neglected the task of propagation of their religion and wasted their strength. Nothing can remain in a static condition. It either makes progress or deteriorates in strength. If I have strength in my arms, I should use them so that they can become stronger and help me make further progress. If I do not use them, they will lose strength and become useless. This verse tells us that in order to sustain the life of our nation, we cannot remain stationary and must move forward. If you quit making any effort, you will start moving backward and death will rapidly come to you. Any faculty that you have been given can remain and develop only if put to use. If left idle, it will go to waste. A tree that does not absorb nutrients from the earth by means of its roots will fail to thrive and soon dry out and wither away. Similarly a nation that continues to nurture itself by bringing in fresh nutrients will stay alive and its strength will be maintained. If it neglects this duty and abstains from inviting and including others within its folds, it will spontaneously lose its strength. This is the firm law of Allah the Most High, which is established in the universe. Strength can only increase if it is used in the proper manner; otherwise it is wasted. The laws of God do not undergo change as stated in the Holy Quran: “Thou seest no incongruity in the creation of the Beneficent” (67:3).

**The Early Period of Islam**

Why and how did the Muslims terminate what was their lifeline? This termination happened when they neglected the duty of inviting outsiders into their faith. In the beginning, a child requires only a small amount of nourishment to sustain its growth. During this early period of the Muslim nation’s growth, noble companions of the Holy Prophet strived hard against overwhelming odds and carried the message of Islam to all corners of the world. When the development of the Islamic nation reached its prime, it was deprived of this nurturing sustenance, although more nutrition is needed in the youthful years of growth. In *Al-Baqarah* and *Al-Imran*, Allah the Most High informed us that you can only be given spiritual life when you strive for the propagation of Islam and invite others into your faith. Nothing remains static; change is inevitable. That which does not progress cannot remain in a stationary state. It necessarily goes into a state of decline.

**Social Intercourse Ordained by Allah**

After relating the need to make an effort for national rejuvenation through propagation, the Holy Quran now draws our attention toward social intercourse in these words:

“O people, keep your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind), and spread from these two many men and women. And keep your duty to Allah, by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship. Surely Allah is ever a Watcher over you.” (4:1)

Was this excellent arrangement the work of Abu Bakr or Zaid bin Thabit? In fact the Holy Quran states:

“Surely on Us rests the collecting of it and the reciting of it So when We recite it, follow its recitation.” (75:17-18)

This shows that its arrangement was the work of Allah and not of Abu Bakr or Zaid bin Thabit. The principles of social and civil interaction evolve from family relationships.

**Women’s Rights and the Marital Relationship Between a Husband and Wife**

The relationship between a husband and a wife is the basis from which evolves family life. It eventually affects the broader spectrum of national and civil intercourse. It is therefore essential that the mutual relations between men and women should be improved. The Holy Prophet has made a wonderful statement in this regard: “The best of you is he who is good to his wife.” This is the truth, for he who does not treat his wife well cannot be expected to treat outsiders with goodness. There is another very lengthy Hadith in which Hazrat Umar states, “During the days of ignorance we did not give any importance to our women. With the revelation of the Holy Quran and its stress upon the rights of women, women became more aware of their rights and started to stand up for them. My wife also challenged my decision in some matter, to which I retorted, ‘who are you to speak up to me in this manner?’ She told me to go and observe my own daughter and see how she argues with the Messenger of Allah.” Umar then visited Hazrat Hafsa (his daughter and wife of the Holy Prophet) and told her that he had come to know of her argumentative behavior toward the Holy Prophet and advised her to refrain, for displeasing the Holy Prophet would not be right. Being his daughter, she remained respectfully silent. Hazrat Umar then visited Hazrat Um-e-Salamah, another wife of the Holy Prophet, and gave her the same advice. She answered back by saying, “Umar who are you to interfere in our family matters?” Upon hearing this, Hazrat Umar turned back.

These incidents illustrate that the Holy Quran established the rights of women in a society where prior to its revelation they were nonexistent. How could Islam ignore the rights of half of the human race and leave them in a state of subjugation? That is why it gave them their lawful rights. In this chapter, *Al-Nisa*, these rights, along with those of orphans are clearly delineated.

**Establishment of the Rights of Women and Children**

Arabs proverbially believed that the right of inheritance belonged only to the one who could wield the spear. They gave no right of inheritance to women, who generally remained at home and did not participate in battles. Even today, in many countries, women’s and children’s rights of inheritance are not acknowledged. Islam considered this unacceptable and gave women and children equal right of inheritance along with men. This chapter discusses these topics, as well as a reference to some of the battles. These battles had to be undertaken to defend the rights of helpless women and children who were facing the tyranny of disbelievers. This is expressed in the following words of the Holy Quran:

“And what reason have you not to fight in the way of Allah, and of the weak among the men and the women and the children, who say: Our Lord, take us out of this town, whose people are oppressors, and grant us from Thee a friend, and grant us from Thee a helper!” (4:75)

**Responsibilities of Women with Acquisition of Rights**

Islam is, however, not a religion with a unidirectional focus. While it outlines the rights of women and men, it also delineates their responsibilities. The Holy Quran states, “And women have rights similar to those against them in a just manner” (2:228). A fault of human nature is that everyone wants recognition for their own rights but they fail to recognize their responsibilities in this regard. This includes both men and women. It is essential to appreciate that those who fail to accept their responsibilities cannot get their rights. Every individual must first fulfill his responsibilities and then demand his rights. That is why this chapter begins with the words, “O people, keep your duty to your Lord.”

**The Meaning of *Taqwa* (Keeping Your Duty)**

Someone may point out that the commandment is to keep your duty. What does that have to do with the giving of rights and responsibilities? Remember that the word *Taqwa* means protection and safeguarding and a *muttaqi* is one who safeguards and protects the rights given to him by Allah the Most High. *Muttaqi* is also the one who safeguards against questionable practices. This is explained in a Hadith of the Prophet: “What is lawful is manifest and what is unlawful is manifest and between these two are doubtful things which many people do not know. So whoever guards himself against the doubtful things, he keeps his religion and his honor unsullied, and whoever falls into doubtful things is like the herdsman who grazes his cattle on the borders of a reserve — he is likely to enter it. Know that every king has a reserve and know that the reserve of Allah in His land is what He has forbidden” (B. 2:38). *Muttaqi* is the one who fulfills all rights and responsibilities assigned to him by Allah the Most High. This encompasses the rights of his family members, relatives, and those not related to him. It is essential to discharge all of these under all circumstances. This is called *Taqwa* or keeping one’s duty.

**Who is the Perfect Believer?**

One should fulfill all human rights in the same manner as he wants his rights to be fulfilled. That is why the Hadith states, “A person from amongst you is not a believer until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself.” Everyone is quite aware of his own rights, but shortchanges those of others. Perfection in belief cannot be reached until the receiving and giving of rights strikes a just balance. The major reason for all conflicts in the world is a lack of awareness of this truth amongst people. Safeguarding human rights is the basis of resolving all these contentious matters irrespective of the human condition. If those who are being ruled continue to demand only their rights and do not fulfill their responsibilities, society cannot function. The golden principle that can work for all types of social relationships is that man should be fully cognizant of his responsibilities and give the rights of others just as he wishes no one to curtail his own.

**The Meaning of *TaqwAllah* (Keep Your Duty to Allah)**

There is a relationship between Allah and every human being, which does not involve any intermediaries. The words, “Keep your duty to your Lord,” are to emphasize that this matter is between man and his *Rabb* (nurturer unto perfection) and that he should therefore fully understand and fulfill his duty. If I do some good deed with the intent that it should benefit a certain friend, or if I commit evil to harm my enemy, it goes contrary to the relationship between man and his *Rabb* (nurturer unto perfection). In fact, before doing anything we should keep our accountability to Allah the Most High in our mind, not forget our relationship with our *Rabb* (nurturer unto perfection) and fulfill the responsibilities assigned to us according to the command of Allah.

**There is no Intermediary Between the Creator and His Creation**

“And certainly you have come to Us one by one as We created you at first, and you have left behind your backs what We gave you. And We see not with you your intercessors about whom you asserted that they were (Allah’s) associates in respect to you. Certainly the ties between you are now cut off and that which you asserted has failed you.” (6:94)

In the end, every man is answerable to Allah, at which time there are no intermediaries or intercessors. Therefore, always remember that you are going to die. Being aware of your mortality is a reminder of the relationship between you and God. Thus, one should be aware of his responsibilities and strive to fulfill them. This is what is meant by keeping, “Your duty to your Lord.” He is your *Rabb*, your nurturer unto perfection. You can evolve spiritually only by being aware of your accountability to the One who nurtures you unto perfection. Now another relationship is pointed out in the words, “Who created you from a single being.” Since all of mankind is the offspring of a single being, the whole of humanity is bonded in the tie of universal brotherhood.

**The Broader Concept of Universal Brotherhood**

“And created its mate of the same (kind), and spread from these two, many men and women.” These words of the Holy Quran give us the broadest concept of universal brotherhood. Our relationships with each other should be on the basis of understanding this concept. It is further stated, “And keep your duty to Allah, by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship.” By guarding the ties of *arham* (wombs) is meant the rights of relationships that result from the female side. Our Holy Prophet held a very broad concept of these ties of relationships. This is evident from his statement to his followers: “When you go to Egypt, treat the Egyptians kindly because our mother (Hazrat Hajira the wife of Prophet Abraham) came from Egypt.” This is the breadth of the teachings of the prophets. No nation can survive in the world by being intolerant. The condition of Muslims is such, however, that they even try to exclude Muslims from their religion. Strangely enough, though verbally, when they declare them as disbelievers[[1]](#footnote-1) their practice goes against it.

***Assalaamu-Alaikum* and the Funeral Prayer for the Disbeliever**

Why do they offer the salutation of *assalaamu-alaikum* to them? How far is it permissible to offer *assalaamu-alaikum* to the disbeliever? If it is considered a distinctive mark of a Muslim, then why should it be applied to a disbeliever? Furthermore a command is issued that funeral prayer should not be said for one who is not a member of the Ahmadiyya community, but the followers disregard the wishes of their mentor[[2]](#footnote-2) and continue the practice. A principle should be proclaimed only when it can be put into practice, for otherwise it is not likely to succeed. The Holy Quran states: “And say not to anyone who offers you salutation, Thou art not a believer” (4:94). In other words, it is only permissible to offer this salutation to a Muslim and not to a disbeliever. Why do you consider offering them salutation as permissible when you do not consider them Muslims? I advise you that numerical strength or weakness does not matter. You should see if the principles that are being proclaimed are practical or not. What cannot be practiced should not at all be accepted no matter who the proponent is, for a principle that cannot be put into practice becomes useless.

**If Muslims Become Categorized as Disbelievers, then the Coming of the Promised Messiah Cannot be a Sign of Mercy**

This is a strange doctrine being promoted, that, with the advent of the Promised Messiah, a one year old child who is totally innocent becomes a disbeliever as does a hundred year old man who has followed the commandments of God throughout his life. In fact, Muslims all over the world, whether they are in China, Kandahar, Turkistan, remote areas of Russia, the jungles of Africa, or the desert of Arabia where people do not even know the name of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, all become disbelievers and outside the pale of Islam by virtue of this doctrine. Those appointed by God always bring the Mercy of God with them. What kind of tribulation is this that the whole world has been afflicted by it and has been put at a distance from the Mercy of God? Fear God and the accountability toward your Lord (*Rabb*).

**Do Not Become Accomplices**

If you deem all this to be a lie then why do you become accomplices in this, in deference to some individual? These worldly relationships carry no meaning. You have to be accountable to God one day. Being a spiritual mentor (*pir*) or his follower is not going to be of any benefit to you on the Day of Judgment. Use your reasoning in matters of your religion and if you find somebody promoting what is wrong, throw it back in his face. Only fearing the accountability of Allah will be of some benefit to you and no other tie in a relationship. The Holy Quran states, “And no soul earns (evil) but against itself. Nor does a bearer of burden (*wizr*) bear another’s burden” (6:164). Christians have been deceived to believe that the Messiah can bear the burden of their sins. The Arabic word *wizr* indicates that he himself is bearing the burden of his responsibilities. How can he bear someone else’s burden? Whether it is a spiritual leader or his follower, a king or mendicant, all are equal before God. All will be held accountable. Therefore, “O people, keep your duty to your Lord.” Understand your responsibilities and fear the accountability of your Lord.

**The Second Sermon**

**A Very Important Exhortation**

I have stated earlier that human effort can only work effectively if exerted in a certain direction. I therefore advise you to spend your energy toward the achievement of a higher goal. Indulging in useless talk and answering abuse with abuse is useless and distracts you from your real goal. You should leave these matters aside and manifest a high moral character. This is a matter of prime importance. You should not neglect it to the best of your ability. I am not saying that you should not show firmness where it is needed and is morally correct. This also needs to be done, particularly by those who are assigned the task of answering the objections and criticism of the opponents of Islam. This should, however, be done to the extent that it is not detrimental to good morals. It should not be so that you waste all your time and energy in these matters, while the real task remains unaccomplished. If you spend all your energy on this task you will lose your high moral ground. There was a time when there was great controversy amongst the Christians as to whether God and man could together be one. Great debates were held on this subject. Today a similar effort is being made to raise a recipient of non-prophetic revelation and follower of Holy Prophet Muhammad, to a prophet.

In the Christian world, at the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, there was one sect that combined humanity and divinity into one being while the other opposed it. The famous library of Alexandria was full of discourses on this matter. It is erroneously alleged that this library was burned down by Muslims during the time of Hazrat Umar, who used its contents to warm the baths of Alexandria for a period of six months. Galen, a famous historian, however, confirms that this burning of the library at Alexandria occurred much before the time of Hazrat Umar. Even if it is accepted as true, there was perhaps no better use for these books than to use them as fuel for warming the baths. It is moving in the wrong direction to waste one’s strength in such useless arguments. These newspapers that are full of such arguments may please a few followers today, but a time will come when people will give them no more importance than paper trash. You should strive to develop your morals and abstain from activities that affect them adversely.

**The Responsibilities of a Muslim Toward a Fellow Muslim**

It must be remembered that a Muslim has certain responsibilities toward other fellow Muslims. For example, offering the salutation *assalaamu-alaikum*, visiting the sick, attending the funeral prayer, burial of the dead body etc. The condition today is such that people will travel miles to attend a party but cannot spare time to attend a funeral. Always respect the dead, in particular those related to you. If someone from amongst your brothers passes away, be sure to attend their funeral. This is a very important matter for all of you to follow.

1. This was the general attitude of the followers of Mian Mahmud Ahmad after the split in the Ahmadiyya Movement. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The mentor, in this case, was Mian Mahmud Ahmad who was issuing these edicts to his followers. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)