

Importance of Obedience to Nizam-e-Jama'at

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And they swear by Allah their strongest oaths that, if thou command them, they will surely go forth. Say, 'Swear not; *what is required is actual obedience in what is right. Surely, Allah is well aware of what you do.*' (Al-Nur, 24:54)

Honored Guests of the Promised Messiah^{as}:

The topic of my speech is Importance of Obedience to Nizam-e-Jama'at. A good understanding of this topic is critical to peace and harmony in our community and to our individual moral and spiritual success. I have divided my speech into two sub-topics, Nizam-e-Jama'at and Obedience.

What is Nizam-e-Jama'at?

Nizam-e-Jama'at simply means the Overall System or Organization of the Ahamdiyya Muslim Community. The primary purpose of this Nizam is to unite the true followers of the Promised Messiah^{as}, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, in a worldwide brotherhood so they can:

- (a) Reform themselves to real Islamic Teachings
- (b) Spread the message of real Islam throughout the world
- (c) Serve mankind for the sake and pleasure of Allah

This Nizam was initiated on March 23, 1889, when the Promised Messiah^{as} took *bai'at* from his close disciples. Since then, as this community continues to grow in size and complexity, so does the Nizam-e-Jama'at.

Today, this Nizam is established in 193 countries to various levels of development and maturity. After the demise of the Promised Messiah^{as}, his five divinely guided Successors have lead and developed this Nizam. This Nizam is thus the delicious fruit of Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya.

Nizam-e-Jama'at is a comprehensive term that consists of its:

- Aims and Objectives
- Traditions and Culture

- Moral and Spiritual Guidance (regarding Worship, Lifestyle, Social Interaction, Rishta-Naatah, Ceremonies, ...) – Tarbiyyat
- Schemes and Campaigns (Tabligh, Financial Sacrifices, Social Services)
- Organizational Structure (Jama'at & Auxiliary – Local, Regional, National and International)
- Administrative Processes and Procedures – Consultation (*Shura*), Authoritative Hierarchy, Reformation (*Islah*), Judiciary (*Qaza*),...
- Programs and Priorities (Jalsas/Ijtemas/Meetings – Local, Regional, National, International; Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Annually)
- Members (you and I)

Is this Nizam perfect? No, because its operators are after all human. However, unlike any other system or organization, the roots, nourishment, support and protection of this Nizam are divine. This Nizam is in operation for the good of its current and future members. And, you and I, the fortunate current members of this Blessed Nizam, have the obligation to obey it, and make it better.

What is Obedience?

Obedience means compliance, submission, agreement, duty, respect, and deference. According to the Holy Qur'an, the hallmark of true believers is:

We hear and we obey. (2:286)

This attitude of 'hear and obey' is not under any duress. The context of this verse proves that this trait of true believers is a natural outcome of their belief in Allah, His Angels, His Books, and His Messengers. The history of prophets and their disciples indicates that the level and demonstration of this trait of obedience is directly proportional to their level of belief and conviction.

A mere proclamation of belief or allegiance is for naught unless it is accompanied by complete obedience. Allah tells the Holy Prophet^{sa} to admonish his followers:

Swear not; what is required is actual obedience in what is right. (24:54)

At another place in the Holy Qur'an, Allah says:

O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey His Messenger and those who are in authority among you. (4:60)

Therefore, complete obedience to the Nizam-e-Jama'at is incumbent on Ahmadi Muslims after their *bai'at*. The 10th Condition of Bai'at reads:

He/She shall enter into a bond of brotherhood with this humble servant of God, pledging obedience to me in everything good, for the sake of God, and remain faithful to it till the day of his/her death. He/She shall exert such a high devotion in the observance of this bond as is not to be found in any other worldly relationship and connection that demand devoted dutifulness.

Explaining this condition of *bai'at*, Hadhrat Khalifatul Masihil Khamis^{ab} says:

1. You should be mindful that this bond does not remain inactive, rather it should become stronger every day.
2. You have to be obedient without grumbling. You never have the right to say that such and such cannot be done or that you cannot do such and such at this time.
3. When you have taken the *bai'at* and have entered the Nizam-e-Jama'at, you have given everything of yours to the Promised Messiah^{as}.
4. This condition is such that the more one thinks about it, the deeper one submerges in the love of the Promised Messiah^{as} and the more one finds oneself bound by the Nizam-e-Jama'at.

Admonishing those who took the *bai'at* on March 23, 1889, the Promised Messiah^{as} said:

To utter these words (of *bai'at*) is easy, but to do justice to them is hard because Satan is always busy trying to make man careless about his faith. Satan shows the world and its benefits to be within reach, and faith to be distant. In this way, the heart is hardened and each subsequent condition is worse than the previous one. (*Dhikr-e-Habib*, pp. 436-438)

Therefore, after taking real *bai'at*, we are naturally obligated to obey the Nizam-e-Jama'at. However, it is easier said than done, especially, if obedience requires doing something against our own desires and expectations. In our daily lives, Obedience to Nizam-e-Jama'at practically boils down to respect and obedience of a local office holder of the Nizam-e-Jama'at. And, if Satan has his way, personal ego, vanity and jealousy get in the way of such obedience, either in the form of a superiority complex about one's knowledge and righteousness, or a victim

mentality of some perceived unjust treatment, or some personal differences. In such situations, a couple of hadith should be kept in mind.

Hadhrat Anas^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said:

Hear and obey even if a Negro slave, whose head is like a grape, is placed in authority over you. (*Bukhari*)

This hadith implies that, if we don't have this level of obedience, we not only disrespect and disobey such a person, we also disrespect and disobey the Nizam that put him or her in authority.

Similarly, Hadhrat Abu Hurairah^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said:

You are obligated to hear and obey in prosperity and adversity, willingly or unwillingly, and even when you are treated unjustly. (*Muslim*)

To practice this level of obedience, we should separate our personal differences from the Nizam-e-Jama'at. Of course, we must resolve our personal differences sooner rather than later and do so within the Nizam-e-Jama'at. However, in the meantime, if we are unable to respect an officer as a person, we must respect and obey him or her as a face of the Nizam-e-Jama'at.

As Ahmadi Muslims, we are all members of this Nizam and many of us also serve this Nizam in one capacity or another. So, let us review what is expected of us as members and then as officers.

As Members of the Nizam-e-Jama'at, we should not only obey this Nizam but we should strive to establish and strengthen it through active participation, preferring its interests over all personal interests. We should discourage all cynicism about it, remembering that obedience is inextricably tied to respect and reverence. Any loose talk, especially in front of vulnerable youth or new members, can tarnish the respect of Nizam-e-Jama'at and thus hinder its proper obedience. We should neither be indifferent to the Nizam nor just criticize it from the sidelines; rather we should get engaged, offer solutions and be part of those solutions by volunteering to help. We should respect the officers and volunteers of the Nizam and forego their shortcomings. They may not be perfect, but they are the best we have. They offer a lot of sacrifices and take on a lot of grief out of

their goodness for the love of Allah and this Nizam. We should remember that they face the same struggles and frustrations of daily life as we do. We should help them in their service to the Nizam and pray for them to do better. While the officers and volunteers of the Nizam are no rulers by any stretch of imagination, the following two hadith are very insightful and instructive.

Hadhrat Ibn Abbas^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said:

If a person experiences something unpleasant at the hands of a ruler he should bear it with equanimity, for he who departs from obedience a hand's breadth dies in error. *(Bukhari and Muslim)*

Similarly, Hadhrat Auf bin Malik^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said:

Your best rulers will be those whom you love and who love you, and for whom you pray and who pray for you; and your worst rulers will be those whom you hate and who hate you, and whom you curse and who curse you. *(Muslim)*

On this point, the Promised Messiah^{as} said:

If the ruler is a cruel person you should not go about talking ill of him; you should try to reform yourselves and make yourselves better in every way. God will remove him or make him a better man. Whatever hardship a man passes through, it is the outcome of his own evil deeds. Otherwise so far as a believer is concerned God is with him. God Himself provides him with everything. My advice to you is that you should become a model of every virtue. *(Malfoozat, Vol 2)*

Therefore, if we are true believers, we should love, respect and pray for all officers and servants of this Nizam.

Another proactive way of establishing and strengthening the Nizam-e-Jama'at is to take the election process more seriously as a sacred duty. We should be well informed about the functions of various offices and be fully engaged in the election process. It is painful to note that sometimes local elections have to be postponed due to lack of quorum. Such postponements indicate that more than 50% of the eligible voters do not care for it. Then, once an election is held, we should fully respect, support and cooperate with the approved officer regardless of whether we voted for that person or not.

As Officers of the Nizam-e-Jama'at, we have the obligation to create and promote an environment that enables the members to be attached and obedient to the Nizam. We should be compassionate, forgiving, and prayerful towards the members. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

Pardon them and ask forgiveness for them, and consult them. (3:160)

We should respect, befriend and engage all members and seek their input and assistance in the affairs of the Nizam. We should look after their physical, moral and spiritual needs and well being. We should be kind and polite towards them. Hadhrat Ayesha^{ra} relates the Holy Prophet^{sa} prayed:

Allah, when one who is placed in authority over my people is hard on them, be Thou hard on him also, and when such a one is gentle with them, be Thou gentle with him also. (Muslim)

Similarly, we should be just and fair in the discharge of our duties of the Nizam. Hadhrat Abdullah ibn Amr ibn A's^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said:

The just will be placed in columns of light in the presence of Allah. They will be those who act justly in their decisions, their families and the affairs committed to them. (Muslim)

In short, as officers of the Nizam-e-Jama'at we should do *istaghfar* and ensure that no one moves away from the Nizam due to our shortcomings or any inadvertent insolence.

Now, let us switch gears and reflect upon the objectives and cultural aspects of the Nizam-e-Jama'at. Keeping in mind that obedience means compliance, submission, agreement, duty, respect, and deference, let us ask ourselves how obedient and compliant we are with the Nizam-e-Jama'at in these practical situations:

1. Offering congregational prayers in the mosque
2. Paying Jama'at and Auxiliary subscriptions regularly
3. Propagating the message of Islam Ahmadiyyat to others
4. Attending various local Jama'at and Auxiliary programs
5. Adopting Jama'at guidelines on dress code and social interaction
6. Following Jama'at guidelines on the *rishta-naatah* process

7. Following Jama'at guidelines on various ceremonies, like weddings
8. Following Jama'at guidelines on resolving our personal or family disputes

My Dear Ahmadi Muslim Brothers and Sisters and Youngsters, after taking *bai'at*, we are duty bound to Respect and Obey the Nizam-e-Jama'at to the best of our ability. The Promised Messiah^{as} has set a very high standard for his true followers. Hadhoo^{as} explained that the insight with which his followers recognized and accepted him is like a *karamat* (miracle). It is with this God given light that the believer navigates through the pitfalls of this life and stay on the right path. So, those of us who are born Ahmadis, we need to pray to Allah for this insight and then consciously take the real *bai'at*. The Promised Messiah^{as} elucidated the main point of *bai'at* as *tauba* (repentance) and likened *tauba* as a migration from the old lifestyle to a new lifestyle and never going back. Hadhoo^{as} also described real *bai'at* like a branch grafted to him. He expected us to be green and growing branches, not dry and dead ones.

To appreciate the Importance of Obedience to Nizam-e-Jama'at, we have to see the value in Nizam-e-Jama'at. We should reflect upon the plight of those who failed to see this value. In the early years of Ahmadiyyat, those who disobeyed the Nizam deprived themselves of all the bounties of Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya flowing through this Nizam. Even today, look around for those who are ignorant of or indifferent to this Blessed Nizam and ask, are they happier and more peaceful than those who are trying to respect and obey it?

This Blessed Nizam is a manifestation of Allah's Grace (*Rahmaniyyat*). By respecting and obeying this Nizam, we can become deserving of Allah's Mercy (*Rahimiyyat*). Here are some of the countless values and bounties of this Nizam:

1. This Nizam provides us divine guidance under Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya. Through it, we have free access to the priceless advice from Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih^{ab} at least every Friday.
2. This Nizam is like an extended family that provides us an identity and fulfills our social needs. It provides a loving company of the noble and the righteous.

3. This Nizam is like an impenetrable fort that protects us from evils and offers us peace and tranquility in an environment of mutual love and respect. It provides us numerous opportunities to grow morally and spiritually.
4. This Nizam inspires and nourishes hope, scholarship and purposeful pursuits of happiness and service to mankind.

This reminds me of a story. It is said that in the court of a king, people used to bring different gifts. On one such occasion, someone brought some *luddoo* (sweets). As usual, the king shared those with his courtiers. All the courtiers enjoyed the delicious *luddoo* and quickly finished eating them, except one wise old man who had only taken one small bite and seemed very pensive. The king asked him as to why he was not eating and enjoying the *luddoo*. The old man said that the *luddoo* indeed was very delicious and he is enjoying it very much. However, he said that when he took the first bite he could not help but to praise Allah that how He had arranged a whole system and aligned a lot of resources so that a humble servant like him could taste that delicious *luddoo*. It was Allah's Grace (*Rahmaniyyat*) that He created the field, the water, the sun, the grain, the crop and other ingredients, the farmer, the middlemen, the cook, and on and on, such that he could enjoy the *luddoo*. So, he was busy praising Allah while enjoying the *luddoo*.

In the same way, it will be a tragedy if, having accepted Ahmadiyyat, we fail to see any value in this Blessed Nizam, remain ignorant and indifferent to it, and not praise Allah for this Grace and Bounty. Actually, the question should not be whether there is any value and benefit for us in this Nizam, rather the real question should be what value and contribution do we add to this Nizam.

Again, after taking *bai'at*, indifference and disobedience to Nizam-e-Jama'at is not an option. Hadhrat Ibn Umar^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said:

He who dies having discarded his association with the community dies in error.
(*Muslim*)

Let us remember that this Nizam is for us. May we be for this Nizam and may this Nizam become our real identity. May Allah enable us to realize the significance of our *bai'at* to the Promised Messiah^{as} and live a life of sincere Obedience to this Blessed Nizam-e-Jama'at. May we always grow like green branches firmly grafted to the blessed tree of this Nizam. *Ameen*.