

West Coast Jalsa Salana 2012. Sunday Dec 30th 2012 “**On Harboring a critical spirit**”
 Concluding Address by Naib Amir, USA, Dr. Nasim Rehmatullah

I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak to you today. It is a great honor.

I hope and pray that as participants in this Jalsa West Coast 2012 all of us become the true beneficiaries of the prayers of the Promised Messiah^{as}

The purpose of the Jalsa as has been enunciated by many over the last couple of days is to bond with each other and learn from each other and strive for spiritual and secular excellence consistent with the teachings of the Holy Prophet^{sa} and the Promised Messiah^{as}

We were at this hotel in Harrisburg at the Jalsa Salana USA 2012. During the Jalsa it is common for many wanting to volunteer for work in MTA. So we were going up the elevator . There were about 5-6 of us. This kid talking to his father saying that he wants to work for MTA and that he (the father) should talk to the person who is in-charge. The father says why don't you talk to him yourself he is behind you. He turns around and looks at me up and down for ten seconds and then turns back the other way. His facial expression said it. He was disappointed .It was an anticlimax for him.

In talking about excellence The Holy Quran refers to us “as the best people raised for the good of mankind” (kuntum khaira ummatin ookrayjat linaasay) To do good we must exude goodness by our words and deeds so as to ennoble the rest of mankind.

As we usher into the year 2013 and as we all look to becoming a better people we must monitor our goodness with a constant introspective analysis because *the highest form of maturity is self- inquiry.*

The Prophet^{sa} also provided a basic rule of good character when he responded to a question regarding salvation. He replied: "*It is necessary for you to control your tongue and weep for your own faults.*"

I would suggest this coming year we focus on this habit or character trait that is a deterrent or impediment to being good. In other words *harboring a critical spirit or the habit of finding fault with others.* A “critical spirit,” is an obsessive attitude of criticism and fault-finding . It is a negative attitude that focuses on real or imagined faults .It reeks of impatience and perhaps arrogance .

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There is a saying “*Great Minds Talk About Ideas While Small Minds Talk About People*”. So this coming year we must endeavor not only to grow physically but more importantly grow and evolve emotionally, mentally and spiritually as well.

A critical spirit comes to many as natural impulse. We don't have to be taught how to gripe and whine. The existence of a real problem does not mean that we can harbor a critical spirit and start slandering people.

Yes there are more environmental triggers today. *The online world of the internet, social networks, twitter and mobile phones has created an environment that is more conducive to making small talk and talking about people. Technology has made us more inquisitive and more impatient. We chatter more and many a times unnecessarily.*

So what is the difference between critical spirit or “righteous indignation?” The motivation and tone of critical spirit is different. It focuses on the problem and tends to put someone down. What separates griping / complaining / whining / critical spirit from legitimate or genuine concern is the absence of a solution and the tone we use to address the issues or the problems.

*At the outset we should resolve to raise our awareness and consciousness about this character trait as it causes a lot of problems. We should heed the warning in the Holy Quran where Allah says, "O you who believe, let not one people deride another people perchance they may be better than they, nor let women deride other women, perchance they may be better than they; **and do not find fault with your own people** nor call one another by nicknames. .. and those who do not repent they are wrongdoers”*
(Hujuraat 49:12)

It is better to focus on lessening the habit of finding faults in others and paying more attention on finding our own faults so we can fix them and become a better people. One who contemplates his own flaws is too busy to consider other people's faults. Our life should be a life of prayers, humility, reformation, charity and love. The key is God-consciousness and being aware of divine attributes and the desire to emulate those attributes.

We need to make it a priority to avoid gossip. That also means we should not be nosey. Nosey people are critical people. They want to know all the details and the latest scoop, not so they can pray for the person, not because they are genuinely interested, but because they know they will hear something juicy that will feed their flesh and they can run and tell their friends.

Promoting right & forbidding wrong is not fault-finding. As people of faith and Muslims who believe in the Messiah Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani^{as}, we have the duty to promote good and forbid evil. We thus engage ourselves, as social beings, in improving ourselves and working towards improving the world we live in. The only criticism that is ever constructive is that which is expressed in love to “build up,” not to tear down – it is always expressed face-to-face, never behind their back.

As people of faith, we should also have the decency not to search for faults in others. One way is, to mind our own business. While the purpose of promoting good and forbidding evil is to correct and restore; fault-finding inevitably leads to undermining the character of people and sometimes to destroying relationships.

The Holy Prophet^{sa} said: "*The worst of people are those engaged in slandering others, those who ruin relationships between dear ones and who try to find fault with innocent people.*" He also warned us that: "*those who unduly pursue the shortcomings of others will have their own faults exposed.*"

In life, no matter how much good there is, you can always find something bad if you look for it. You can find some fault, some weakness, something that you don't understand or like. You can either develop an eye for the good, or you can develop a critical eye and always see the bad.

Patience is a virtue that we need to inculcate. Lack of patience and lack of knowledge makes us say and do things that are not right.

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The story of two monks at a shallow river crossing is a case in point. The story goes that two monks came to a river crossing and found a beautiful young woman standing on the river bank, perplexed as to how to get across without soiling her shoes and clothing. One of the monks, seeing her plight, simply lifted her up in his arms and, wading into the river, carried her to the far bank. Hours and several miles later, the second monk could no longer contain his dismay over what his fellow monk had done. "We're monks," he declared. "We're not supposed to touch women. How could you pick her up like that?" His friend replied, "I set her down on the river bank, but I see that you're still carrying her."

So the advice is that we all Watch our Hearts, our Emotions and our Tongues .

Speech is projection of thoughts and emotions; the content of speech reflects the culture of the heart, so consider carefully how you feel about others, why you feel the way you feel and what you say about people.

The Holy Prophet^{sa} said :"*None of your faith is correct unless your heart is upright and your heart will not be upright until your tongue is in order.*"

That is why Allah states in the Qur'an
"*Speak what is correct, your actions will be rectified and your sins will be forgiven.*"

Since virtually all fault-finding is conveyed verbally and now a days via email , facebook and twitter we must be careful of the power of the tongue since "*Affliction caused by the tongue is more severe than the harm caused by the sword.*"

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It is recommended that you look into your own heart, discover what it is that gives you pain and then refuse, under any circumstance whatsoever, to inflict that pain on anybody else.

This is why marriages are in so much trouble today. A spouse or both spouses have developed a habit of being negative and only seeing the negative. They've become too critical and view everything through their critical eye.

It's like the story of this man . His wife was making him breakfast, and he asked for two eggs, one scrambled and one fried. So she made them and put them on a plate. When he saw them, he shook his head.

She said, "What did I do wrong now? That's exactly what you asked for." He said, "I should have known it. You fried the wrong egg."

You see, you can train yourself to see your spouse's strengths, or you can train yourself to see their weaknesses. You can focus on what you like about your spouse and magnify their good qualities, or you can focus on what you don't like and magnify the things that annoy you.

When we're critical, we begin to nag and exaggerate and make a big deal out of things that are not big deals; *that's when we start complaining that the wrong egg got fried.*

If you struggle in this area, I would encourage you to make a list of the qualities that you like about your spouse. Write down the things that they do right. He may not be a good communicator, but he's a hard worker. Put that on your list. She may have some weaknesses, but she is a great mother. She is smart. She is intelligent. Write that down. Every day go over it. Start focusing on their good qualities.

You have to make a switch. Decide today to start appreciating your spouse's strengths and learn to downplay their weaknesses. If you do, your marriage will be filled with more peace, unity and love, and you'll see God bless your marriage in greater ways.

The Promised Messiah^{as} has reminded us all especially women that they should avoid dishonesty, criticism of others, exaggeration and false accusations. Hadrat Khalifatul Masih V also reminds us in one of his sermons that no one is perfect, therefore we must look at our own condition critically before we raise our finger towards another person. It takes a courageous man to look at his own faults. Once he/she starts to observe himself, he will refrain from talking about others. Hazur said "If we see a weakness in another person, we should pray for that person with a sincere heart"

You see "To the pure all things are pure". If you cannot ever see anything right it is an internal issue . We need to do a lot of our own house cleaning. If there is any hope for us to evolve into an uplifting, ennobling and worthwhile community (*kuntum khaira ummatin*) we must emerge from this attitude of strife, debasement and fanaticism. We must revert back to God. *The individuals who have brought about perhaps the most change in the world have often drawn from the deep wells of their spiritual lives to flood the world around them with compassion, with concern, and with love. We should be those people.*

The presence of problems is not the issue – that is a part of our everyday experience – how we handle them can be. *We humans are an angry, passionate lot and, for all our genius pretty stupid.* We are impatient and arrogant. We know the effects of a critical spirit, so let us each do our part in making sure we conduct ourselves in such a way so as to generate God's blessings on us and not his wrath.

Take home message is: Let go of the negative energy. Be Patient. Think before you say anything or before you act

It is crucial to remove negative energy as an essential part of our everyday lives in order to maintain our state of mind and to stay happy. Life is not painless. All of us must choose one of the two pains: The pain of discipline or the pain of regret. Make the rest of your life the best of your life

Leave you with a prayer : Lord keep Your arm around my shoulder and Your hand over my mouth

As we close I wish to thank Naib Amir Hameed ur Rehman sahib, Maulana Shamshad sahib , the organizers and the workers for doing a wonderful job. May Allah reward them abundantly.

Please drive carefully as you make your way home from here. Take your time.

May you all get back safely to the comfort of your homes and your families. The comfort of your wives. (Lay Yuskona elayha 7:190). God has made them special. They bring joy and color into our lives. Be kind to them and treat them well. God will have mercy on you. Remember what the HP said “ The best of you are those who treat their wives the best”

In our prayers

Let us remember the victims and the families of the Sandyhook school tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut. May Allah console them and give them strength.

Let us remember those who are suffering in various parts of the world under various forms of oppression and persecution especially in Pakistan, Syria and Palestine.

Let us remember those who have passed away during the year. May Allah have mercy on them. May Allah have special mercy on the Ahmadi Martyrs and their families.

Let us pray for those who are sick and suffering. May Allah heal them and grant them health and wellness.

Let us pray for all those in difficulties. Legal, financial and family matters. May Allah help alleviate their distress.

Let us implore Allah to help us elect good leaders so we as Americans are better able to serve mankind. May Allah protect our country.

Let us pray for Khalifatul Masih V. May Allah grant him good health and a long life to guide us and lead us to the victory of Islam and Ahmadiyyat. We are the beneficiaries of the Divine Protection of Khilafat . This is our life line let us hold on to it firmly and not let go.

Let us pray for Amir sahib, the missionaries and all those who sacrifice so much to serve the Jamaat. May Allah reward them abundantly

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Let us pray for our parents. We owe them a lot. May Allah have mercy on them. Let us pray for our spouses and children. May Allah protect them and make them true servants of Islam and Ahmadiyyat

Let us send darood abundantly on our greatest benefactors The Holy Prophet^{saw} and The Promised Messiah^{as}

Let us pray that we enter the new year with increased vigor and determination to serve Allah and man to the best of our abilities and achieve true joy, peace and tranquility.

Rabbana Taqqabal Minna Inna Ka untus sami ul aleem