

## ETIQUETTES AND IMPORTANCE OF IJLAAS

“He alone can keep the mosques of Allah in a good and flourishing condition who believes in Allah, and the Last day and observes prayer, and pays the Zakat, and fears none but Allah; so these it is who may be among those who reach the goal.” (The Holy Qur'an, Surah Taubah, v.18)

It is an undeniable fact that our *ijlaas* and *ijtemaat* are very different from worldly meetings and gatherings. The primary objective of organizing *ijlaas* is spiritual rejuvenation and progress. Our goal is to reform ourselves to the point where our purity and piety will attract the *qurb* and *razaa* of Allah ta'ala Himself. Thus, the participants of the *ijlaas* should aim to uplift ourselves spiritually by engaging in the worship of God, and by invoking the remembrance of God (*dhikr-ilahi*). Each topic and issue discussed in the meeting program is supposed to take us towards that goal. We are to use the knowledge learned from these *ijlaas* to spiritually and morally progress in our life journey to get closer to God.

Allah ta'ala has promised that whosoever participates in a gathering, the sole purpose of which is *dhikr-e-illahi*, He will send His angels to be a part of that majlis. This means, what while we are sitting in that meeting-if we are sincerely engaged in remembrance of Allah and if we are silently reciting *durood sharif*, (invoking blessings on the Holy Prophet (sa), the angels are invoking blessings on *us*. They are praying on *our* behalf. And when we depart from the meeting and return to our homes, the angels also say “*Ameen*” and return to God. It is important to remember that human nature is weak and our prayers are not guaranteed acceptance by God. But did you know that the prayers that Angels offer on our behalf are always accepted? And who among us, is *not* in need of acceptance of our prayers?

Undoubtedly, participation in Jama'at meetings is an act of *ibadat*. However, in order to be a recipient of those special blessings that come with participation in Jama'at meetings, every aspect of one's appearance, behaviour, and attitude should be in order. There are certain rules that one must follow for his *ibadat* to be accepted: 1) one must be physically in a clean state (fresh clothes, clean body), 2) one must be mentally pure, and not be engaged in vain pursuits (i.e. talking needlessly, texting, talking on cell phones, playing video games), and finally, 3) one must also be spiritually in a pure and peaceful state (i.e. we should not be harboring negative thoughts or feelings, such as envy, hatred, frustration, irritation, jealousy, anger etc) towards anyone. All these activities will act as barriers for us to fully absorb the blessings of the meeting you are in. If we continue to pursue and engage in these activities, we are losing the entire benefit of being part of that *dhikr ki majlis*. Furthermore, the angels will not be attracted to our company.

Similarly the venue where we hold our gatherings has to meet the requirements of cleanliness and purity. Think about it like this: if you are offering *namaz* in the middle of a busy, noisy

carnival, where people are milling about in all directions, talking, laughing, singing-what kind of benefit is your *namaz* offering you in that situation? Are you going to be able to concentrate?

One important point regarding *ibadat* is that it is intended to benefit us. The *salaat* we offer are for ourselves. God is certainly not in need of our prayers and supplications. If we respect our worship and offer it in a dignified and sincere manner, it will surely be to our own benefit. The *salaat* we offer in this world will bear witness on our behalf on the Day of Judgement, and the one who respects his *salaat* in this world, will be given respect in the heavens.

When we are in a *masjid*, we have an added blessing that we are holding the meeting in the House of God. Even when we hold meetings in Convention Centres or other halls, those venues become places of worship, because our purpose of convening is remembrance of God.

As Canadians, we are extremely fortunate to have freedom of religion and freedom to worship. We are free to build mosques. We are not afraid for our safety if we go and pray in our mosques, unlike so many Ahmadi's around the world. Thus, it is incumbent upon us to make every effort to visit the House of God as frequently as possible. Moreover, we must pay special attention to adorning the *masajid* with our sincere intentions and worship.

I will end with an excerpt from a Friday Sermon given by Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV (ra) on October 16, 1992. This was at the inauguration of Baitul Islam Mosque in Maple ON.

*"...I would like to tell (you) that the beauty of the mosque lies in the beauty of the hearts of the worshippers. I have read nowhere in the Holy Qur'an about external beauty of a mosque. The Holy Ka'aba is the most lovely and beautiful mosque in the world. When Patriarch Abraham (as) and his dear son Ishmael reconstructed it from its ruins, it was in no way a beautiful edifice from any architectural point of view. But that was the most beautiful building on which God put His loving eyes.*

*...Remember that the grace of a mosque is not in its building. It is in the hearts that come into them bowing and prostrating before God. It is said in the Holy Qur'an, "O Children of Adam! Look to your adornment at every time and place of worship." So, you will not get adornment from the mosques, rather they will be adorned by you. Therefore, go to the mosques with the sentiments of sacrifice in His way, with bowing and prostrating spirits. "*