

QUARTERLY

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



The

Message

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March 2002

THE MUSLIM LITERARY TRUST, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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*Not their flesh, nor their blood,
reaches Allah, but to Him is
acceptable observance of duty
on your part. Thus has He made
them subservient to you, that
you may magnify Allah for
guiding you aright. And give
good news to those who do
good (to others). H.Q. 22 v 37*

An abridged version

CHAPTER 92 AL-LAIL (THE NIGHT)

Commentary by Dr. Basharat Ahmad
(Translated by Imam Kalamazad Mohammed)

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

*By the night when it draws a veil!
And the day when it shines!*

*And the creating of the male and the
female! -*

*Your striving is surely (for) diverse
(ends).*

*Then as for him who gives and keeps
his duty,*

And accepts what is good

*We facilitate for him (the way to)
ease.*

*And as for him who is niggardly and
considers himself self-sufficient,*

And rejects what is good -

*We facilitate for him (the way to) dis-
tress,*

*And his wealth will not avail him
when he perishes.*

Surely Ours is to show the way.

*And surely Ours is the Hereafter and
the former.*

So I warn you of the Fire that flames.

*None will enter it but the most un-
fortunate,*

Who rejects (the truth) and turns (his)

back.

*And away from it shall be kept the
most faithful to duty,*

*Who gives his wealth, purifying him-
self.*

*And none has with him any boon for
a reward,*

*Except the seeking of the pleasure of
his Lord, the Most High.*

And he will soon be pleased.

This chapter is a Makkan revelation. The last chapter, *Ash-Shams* (The Sun), dealt with the moral and spiritual excellence that the human soul can acquire. In addition, it gave a clear description of the destruction that attends those who oppose a perfected soul. The present chapter tells us that in order to obtain those qualities of perfection enumerated in chapter 91, *The Sun*, there are two essential prerequisites: forging a strong bond with Allah, and developing the qualities of righteousness and the spirit of sacrifice.

By the night when it draws a

PASS ON THE MESSAGE

*veil!
And the day when it shines!
And the creating of the male
and the female! -
Your striving is surely (for)
diverse (ends).*

The diverse needs of man's strivings naturally produce different results and here, two kinds of evidence are put forward in support of this statement. They are the evidence of the night and the day, and that of the male and the female.

The reason for presenting these two kinds of testimony is to demonstrate the fact that whatever a person attaches himself to will lead to a particular result. For example, we all know that the earth revolves around the sun and that part of it which does not face the sun receives no light and so the darkness of night falls on it. On the other hand, that part which faces the sun makes a connection, as it were, with light and so daylight falls on it.

Similarly, the union between male and female gives birth to new life. If this union is not effected there is no new creation. In the same way, if the human soul (which is considered female) is not partnered with a male, no new life is produced. The male casts his influence and the female receives it. Therefore, everything that exercises an influence on the human soul is figuratively regarded as masculine whilst the human soul is considered feminine.

So, too, the quality of life of the human soul depends on the kind of male with whom it forms an alliance. If, like the night, the human soul chooses darkness and unites with Satan, the

source of darkness, then inevitably darkness will overspread it with the result that the peculiarities of darkness will be born in it. Then alertness of mind will be replaced by heedlessness, while effort and hard work will give way to inertia and stagnation, and the light of discrimination between good and evil will surrender to the darkness of misguidance and error.

In the same way, if it forms a strong connection with Allah, Who is the Source of all heavenly and spiritual light, then it will become as bright as the day and it will exhibit the characteristics of light. It is a fact, therefore, that the consequences of our striving hinge on whether we choose light or darkness. The ways by which these two kinds of attachment are formed are described in the following verses:

*Then as for him who gives
and keeps his duty,
And accepts what is good
We facilitate for him (the way
to) ease*

These are the methods of forming a union with Allah: the first is '*ata* (giving in the way of Allah), that is, sacrifice of person and property, or any other thing, in the way of Allah. The second is '*taqwa* (piety), that is, guarding and upholding the Divinely-ordained duties we owe to Allah and also to His creation. The third is '*accepting what is good*, that is, Islam, which is the supreme good that the Holy Prophet (sas) brought to the world. It is called '*al husna* (goodness) because everything it teaches leads to exquisite goodness and beauty of character. Further, it has no blemish nor imperfection. Thus *ac-*

cepting what is good means accepting Islam. This is placed third in the order (after sacrifice and piety) because the Holy Qur'an wants to emphasise the point that mere verbal acceptance of Islam is not proof of one's sincerity. It has to be accompanied by piety and sacrifice or, in other words, profession of faith must be verified by deeds.

Thus, if sacrifice and righteousness are the hallmarks of a person's conduct, then his affirmation of faith reaches the highest level and it can be deservedly said of him that he has indeed accepted the religion. Although sacrifice and piety and difficulties are inseparably linked and the way to Allah seems arduous, yet this is the only way available to man to enjoy spiritual blessings and favours. As fire is latent in flint so, too, comfort, ease, peace and happiness are concealed in the cloak of difficulties.

*And as for him who is niggardly and considers himself
self-sufficient,
And rejects what is good -
We facilitate for him (the way
to) distress.*

That is, although man can evade the difficulties inherent in this path, the result, however, is not a happy one, for it brings hardship, straitened circumstances, difficulties and sorrow.

Bukhl (niggardliness) means not spending one's money or faculties or other resources appropriately. For example, a need may arise for spending in the way of Allah but an individual withholds his hand. By doing so, he ostensibly escapes the sacrifice and self-denial required for ascending the steep uphill road and suf-

fers no decrease in his money. However, he has really chosen the very path that leads to pain, misery and hardship. Any individual or nation that chooses the route of niggardliness and egoism and rejects the way of sacrifice and high morals must eventually suffer perdition.

Istighna literally means “self-sufficiency” but here it bears different connotations, that is, firstly, not having the slightest thought of sacrificing or spending in the way of Allah and secondly, not showing any inclination for *taqwa* (righteousness) or, in other words, demonstrating a total indifference to the limits of Allah which establish the duties we owe to Allah and also to our fellow human beings. Therefore, *bukhl* (stinginess) and *istighna* (feeling of self-sufficiency or egotism) mean an absence of self-abnegation and piety or rather, a deliberate renunciation of both these noble qualities.

After this, the next verse gives us another peculiarity of the one who contradicts religion: *And rejects what is al-husna (good)*, that is, he rejects Islam. In other words, included among the beliers of Islam is the person whose behaviour contradicts the tenets of the religion. When a person’s actions go against the teachings of a religion, it means that he neither gives up anything for his religion nor does he display the qualities of piety. Thus, in the same category fall both the person who denies Islam and rejects its teachings by word of mouth, and the one whose actions run contrary to the principles of the religion. In other words, this person is a denier of Islam by virtue of his practical behaviour.

The next verse, *We shall facilitate for him (the way to) distress*, refers to the person who holds money dear to his heart and wilfully obeys his own low desires and thinks he is very fortunate in that he has chosen the road to comfort and happiness. Little does he know that he has opted for a path that brings misery and calamity.

Those who verbally claim to be adherents of Islam but avoid the road of self-denial and piety should do some serious self-examination and reflect on whether their avarice and egotism have not placed them in the same class as those who deny religion.

And his wealth will not avail him when he perishes.

This verse tells us that miserliness is the road to ruin. Ironically, the miser will give his life but will not spend his money although he eventually has to leave it behind. He does not realise that his accumulated wealth cannot save him from perdition. In fact, any nation that does not practise the virtue of sacrifice ultimately suffers destruction. Thus, wise is the man who perceives that there is no merit in amassing wealth for its own sake for if it cannot save man from perishing, then wealth that is not put to good use is more worthless than broken pieces of glass. The best way to spend one’s resources is to sacrifice for the sake of Allah for this opens the door to man’s success.

Surely Ours is to show the way.

That is, Allah does not compel anyone. He has clearly shown the way to man. The decision is man’s: he may

choose the virtues of sacrifice and piety and so attain the goal of peace and comfort, or he may adopt the weaknesses of avarice and self-conceit and so end up in misery and agony.

And surely Ours is the Hereafter and the former.

Assurance is given that whoever spends in the way of Allah will be beautifully rewarded not only in the Hereafter but in this life, too. It is true that the life after death belongs to Allah, but we must understand that His power extends over this life also, so man should never have any fears concerning the consequences of his piety and self-denial, and he should expunge from his heart any satanic suggestions that the Hereafter is far away and that sacrifice and righteous conduct will bring only misery and hardship in this world’s life. This verse categorically denies these evil insinuations of Satan and emphasises the fact that no place or time is outside the ambit of Divine control. If Allah recompenses man in the next life, He also rewards him in this life, too.

We have at hand the example of the Holy Prophet’s companions who walked along the difficult but rewarding path of sacrifice and piety. So much did Allah confer on them in this life that many a time they were worried by the fear that perhaps they were getting all their rewards in this world with nothing left for the next life. Take the example of the companions of the Suffa. They were a group from among those who fled with the Holy Prophet (sas) from Makkah to Madinah. They had neither house nor shelter and a thatched-roof shed was

built for them in the courtyard of the Prophet's mosque. The pain of hunger and hardship dogged their life and they passed many days without a morsel of food. Many a time they did not even have clothes to wear and were forced to wrap themselves with the prayer mats from the mosque. Once, a certain companion of the Holy Prophet (sas) found in the jungle a discarded sheet of cloth which was cut in two and given to two men to cover themselves.

But look how liberally and bounteously Allah bestowed His gifts on them in this very life! Not much later after their period of destitution, one member of the group approached another member and asked him for some horses. He replied that as he himself had pressing need of horses just at that time, he could spare him only a few hundred. In other words, so many horses he came to own that he could have lent his friend many more if he himself did not need them for his present work. □

(For complete commentary, read *Commentary of Chapters 86 - 101 of the Holy Qur'an*, published by the Muslim Literary Trust. Price: \$20.00.) Available at HEM Enterprises Ltd.

The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears in every ear a hundred grain. And Allah multiplies (further) for whom He pleases. And Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.

H.Q. 2 v 261

Sacrifice in 'Id al-Adha

(Excerpt from *The Religion of Islam*, pp. 362-365, by Maulana Muhammad Ali.)

The Sacrifice

At 'Id al-Adha, every Muslim who can afford to do so sacrifices an animal. In the case of a goat or a sheep, one animal suffices for one household (Tr. 18:8). In the case of a cow or a camel, seven men may be partners (Tr. 18:7). The animal is sacrificed after the 'Id prayers are over. It may be sacrificed on the day of 'Id or during the two or three days that follow, called the *tashriq* days, the time during which pilgrims stop in Mina (MM. 4:49-iii). The two days' limit is preferable, because the pilgrims are allowed to leave after two days. *Then whoever hastens off in two days, it is no sin for him, and whoever stays behind it is no sin for him* (2:203).

The animal sacrificed must be free from apparent physical defects, and full-grown (*musinna*). The goat or sheep should be at least a year old, the cow two years and the camel five (H. Ch. *al-Adzhiya*). As regards the meat of the slaughtered animals, the Qur'an says: *Eat of them and feed the contented one and the beggar* (22:36). There is no harm if it is dried and sold and the proceeds used for the feeding of the poor. The idea that the meat of the sacrifices should not be stored or eaten for more than three days is contradicted by a saying of the Prophet: "Jābir ibn 'Abd Allah says, 'We did not use to eat the flesh of our sacrifices for more than the three days of Mina; so the Prophet gave us permission and said, "Eat and take it as a provision for the way"; so we ate and made it provision for the

way'" (Bu. 25:124). The giving of one-third, or more, or less, to the poor is simply optional. No hard and fast rules have been laid down. The skin of the animal must, however, be disposed of in charity (Bu. 25:121).

Can sacrifice be replaced by charity?

To the ordinary mind, the idea underlying sacrifice seems no more than charity, and the question has often been asked, May not a Muslim, instead of sacrificing an animal, give away its price in charity? The answer to this question, in the light of Islamic law, is in the negative. The sacrifice by Muslims throughout the world on 'Id day is intended to make Muslim hearts, throughout the world, beat in unison with the hearts of the unparalleled assemblage at Makkah, the centre of Islam. Millions of people assemble there from all quarters of the world, people who have sacrificed all comforts of life for no object except to develop the idea of sacrifice, a sacrifice selfless beyond all measure, because it has no personal or even national end in view, a sacrifice for the sake of God alone. However grand that idea, it receives a greater grandeur from the fact that the people who have been unable to actually make that sacrifice, are made to share the same desire and show their willingness to make the same sacrifice by the ostensible act of the sacrifice of an animal, which is the final act of the pilgrimage. One desire moves the hearts of the whole Muslim world from one end to the other at one

moment, and this is made possible only by the institution of sacrifice, the red letters of which can be read by the ignorant and the learned alike. That this institution should also serve the purpose of charity is quite a different thing. Islam does not allow its rich members to forget their poorer brethren in the hour of their joy at a time of festival, but charity is not the idea underlying the sacrifice on the occasion of the 'Id or the pilgrimage, and, therefore, no mere charity can take the place of sacrifice.

The idea underlying sacrifice

That sacrifice does not consist in the act of shedding the blood of an animal or feeding on its meat is made plain by the Qur'an: *Not their flesh, nor their blood, reaches Allah, but to Him is acceptable observance of duty on your part* (22:37). The underlying significance is made clearer still in another verse: *And for every nation We appointed acts of devotion that they might mention the name of Allah on what He has given them of the cattle quadrupeds. So your God is One God, therefore to Him should you submit; and give good news to the humble, whose hearts tremble when Allah is mentioned, and who are patient in their afflictions* (22:34, 35). The act of the sacrifice of an animal is thus in some way connected with righteousness, with submission to One God, with humbleness of heart, with patience under sufferings: and the sacrifice of the animal is plainly regarded as affecting the heart, as making it tremble at the mention of Allah's name. Here, we are told that it is not any empty mention of a word that they make, but the underlying meaning is that their hearts

should thrill at the mention of that name. Taking away the life of an animal and shedding its blood does not make them ferocious but creates humbleness in their hearts, because they realise that if they have sacrificed an animal over which they hold control, it is their duty to lay down their own lives in the way of Allah, Who is not only their Master but also their Creator and Sustainer, and Who, therefore, exercises a far greater authority over them than they do over the animals. Hence, in the midst of verses speaking of sacrifice, is introduced a verse which requires the faithful to be patient under trials and hardships, in the way of Allah. In the sacrifice of animals, the Qur'an thus gives to its followers the lesson of laying down their own lives in the cause of truth; and the lesson is made clearer still when this section on sacrifice, verses of which have been quoted above, is straightaway followed by a section which requires believers to lay down their lives in the defence of truth, the very first verse of that section running thus: *Permission to fight is given to those on whom war is made because they are*

oppressed (22:39).

It will thus be seen that Islam has invested the principle of sacrifice with a new meaning. The institution of sacrifice has been accepted in one form or another by all the nations of the world. Like all other religious principles which are universally recognised, the principle of sacrifice finds a deeper meaning in Islam. The outward act is still there as of old, but it no longer conveys the meaning attached to it in some ancient religions, namely that of appeasing an offended deity or serving as atonement for sin. In Islam it signifies the sacrifice of the sacrificer himself, and thus becomes an outward symbol of his readiness to lay down his life, and to sacrifice all his interests and desires in the cause of truth. The animal that is sacrificed really stands for the animal within him. And one day, and one particular moment on that day, is chosen so that all Muslim hearts from one end of the world to the other may pulsate with one idea at a particular moment, and thus lead to the development of the idea of self-sacrifice in the community as a whole.□

MUHAMMADANISM

by Dr Gottlieb William Leitner

(This is the first part of a two-part report of an extempore address delivered at South Place Chapel, Finsbury, on Sunday afternoon, 6 January 1889. It was originally reported in *The Times* of July 1889 and later reprinted in the form of a booklet with additional appendices by Swan Sonnenschein & Co., London. We have retained the original title of this talk, that is, Muhammadanism, because Dr GW Leitner had a reason

for choosing this misnomer which he explains in the course of his address. Please refer to the sixth paragraph. Dr Leitner, after retiring as Registrar of the Punjab University, returned to England and established the Oriental Institute at Woking, Surrey, on a piece of land purchased with funds provided by the *Nizam* of the State of Hyderabad Deccan in India. He also built a beautiful mosque on it for which the *Begum* of the State of

Bhopal, India, contributed generously. That is why the mosque was named the Shah Jehan Mosque. In 1912, Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din took control of this deserted mosque and established The Working Muslim Mission. - Ed.)

Islam has been greatly misunderstood, even by scholars like William Muir

My special knowledge of Muhammadanism began in a mosque school at Constantinople in 1854, where I learnt considerable portions of the Qur'an by heart. I have associated with Muhammadans of different sects in Turkey, India and elsewhere, and have studied Arabic, the language in which their sacred literature is written. I may at once point out that without a knowledge of Arabic it is impossible to exercise any influence on the Muhammadan mind, but I would add that there is something better than mere knowledge, and that is sympathy: sympathy is the key to the meaning of knowledge - that which breathes life into what otherwise would be dead bones.

There are instances of eminent scholars who, for want of sympathy, have greatly misjudged Muhammadanism. Sir William Muir, for example, has been led into very serious mistakes in dealing with this religion.

Let us hope that the present occasion may help, in however humble a degree, to cement that fellow-feeling which ought to exist between all religions.

"In proportion as we love truth more and victory less," says Herbert Spencer, "we shall become anxious to know what it is which leads our op-

ponents to think as they do."

More profound is the Tibetan Buddhist Lama's vow never to think, much less to say, that his own religion is better than that of others. The edicts of Asoka, carved on rocks and more monumental than brass, also recommend his subjects to praise the faith of others.

As regards the great religion with which we are dealing today, I have adopted the term *Muhammadanism* in order to limit this address to the creed as now professed by Muhammadans. If I had used the better heading *Islam*, which means the creed of resignation to the Divine Will, a more extensive treatment would have been necessary that can be afforded in the course of an hour.

Islam is a perfect religion - not merely imitative or eclectic of Judaism and Christianity

Muhammadanism is not the religion of the Prophet Muhammad because he only professed to preach the religion of his predecessors, the Jews and the Christians: both of these faiths being stages in the faith of Islam, of which the form preached by Muhammad is the perfection and the seal.

"To walk with God", to have God with us in our daily life with the object of obtaining the "peace that passeth all understanding", "to submit to the Divine Will" - this we, too, profess to seek: but in Muhammadanism this profession is translated into practice, and is the cornerstone of the edifice of that faith.

In one sense Muhammadanism is like, and in another sense unlike, Judaism

and Christianity. To walk with God, to have God ever present in all our acts, is no doubt what the prophets of both these religions taught; and in that sense they were all Muhammadans, or rather *Muslims*, namely, professors of the faith of Islam.

But so far as I know either of Judaism or of Christianity, the system preached by Muhammad was not merely imitative or eclectic; it was also *inspired* - if there be such a process as inspiration from the source of all goodness. Indeed, I venture to state in all humility that if self-sacrifice, honesty of purpose, unswerving belief in one's mission, a marvellous insight into existing wrong or error, and the perception and use of the best means for its removal are among the outward and visible signs of inspiration, the mission of Muhammad was inspired.

Islam is pure Judaism plus proselytism, pure Christianity minus the teaching of St Paul. The Judaism known to Muhammad was chiefly the traditional Masora as distinguished from the Markaba; indeed, pure Judaism as distinct from Buddhistic or Alexandrian importations into it.

The Christianity also which Muhammad desired to restore to its purity was the preaching of Christ, as distinguished on the one part from the mystic creed of St Paul, and the outrageous errors of certain Christian sects known to the Arabs.

Muhammad thought the Jews would accept him as their Messiah, but the exclusiveness of the Jews prevented this. He, however, insisted on the Arabs and on believers generally participating in the blessings of their

common ancestor, Abraham; and his creed, therefore, became Judaism plus proselytism, and Christianity minus the teaching of St Paul.

The idea of Muhammad not to limit the benefits of Abraham's religion to his own people, but to extend them to the world, has thus become the means of converting to a high form of culture and of civilisation millions of the human race, who would either otherwise have remained sunk in barbarism, or would not have been raised to that brotherhood which Islam not only preaches but practices.

The founder of Muhammadanism has been talked of by Christians in the most unworthy manner. Still, at first, he was regarded as a Quasi-Christian Sectarian. Dante refers to Muhammad as a heretic in his *Inferno*; and indeed, in another sense, he was only a dissenter from one of the many forms which have adopted the appellation of *Christian*. Some authors alleged that his religion was taken from the Talmud: but it seems to me that the question of what Muhammadanism really is cannot be summed up better than in stating it to be pure Judaism plus proselytism, and original Christianity minus the teaching of St Paul. This as regards its theory; in practice it is far more than modern Christianity in its artificial European aspect - the Sermon on the Mount translated into daily life.

There is no priesthood in Islam

Every Muhammadan is a church in himself: everyone is allowed to give an opinion on a religious matter, on the basis of the belief common to his co-religionists. They are not slaves to priests; they pray to God without an intermediary, and their place of wor-

ship is wherever they happen to be at the appointed hours of prayer.

Their preacher can also follow other vocations; some of them are shoemakers, etc. But of course, the bulk of their ministers of religion are so by profession in regulated communities. There is no such thing as a Pope among them.

Any ordinary Muhammadan may say, "By resigning myself to the Divine Will I am myself the representative of the faith of which the Prophet Muhammad was the exponent." Indeed, the bulk of Muhammadans throughout the world are guided by the *confidelium*. Those are the Sunnis or *al-Jama'at*, in contradistinction to the second most important sect, the Shi'ahs, which considers Muhammad and his lineal successors to be practically infallible. The Shi'ahs venerate the hereditary principle, and their religious profession is regulated by the interpretation of the Qur'an and of their traditions by their leading priests or learned men, the *Mujtahids*.

Muhammad himself did not make any claim to infallibility. On one occasion he had a revelation censuring himself severely for having turned away from a beggar in order to speak to an illustrious man of the commonwealth, and he published this revelation, the very last thing which he would have done had he been an impostor, as ignorant Christians call the great Arab prophet. Allow me now to read to you the letter of an eminent religious Muhammadan functionary, the present *Sheikh al-Islam* of Constantinople, to a convert, Mr Schumann, which I humbly venture to endorse, except the following passage: "On the day when you were converted to Islam,

your sins were taken into account." There is a revered saying that the "objection of one who is learned is better than the consent of a thousand who are ignorant"; and without in the least professing to be learned, I can, from a Muhammadan standpoint, claim the privilege of a believer in objecting to a ruling which has probably been rendered incorrectly in translation, and which contradicts the injunction addressed to all to "avoid sin and apply yourselves to righteousness", whether Jew, Christian or Muhammadan.

The religious practices of Islam

With regard to the outward signs of a Muhammadan, such as prayer, alms, fasting and pilgrimage, the religious books contain the necessary instructions. As for prayer, they practically enforce that cleanliness is next to godliness, for ablutions precede prayer. The regulations regarding both acts are minute, and as to their ritual, it is not of every Christian that a priest could say what the *Sheikh al-Islam* says of every Muhammadan: "These things, however, may be learnt from the first Musulman that you meet."

Their alms, which are rightly called only a pecuniary prayer, consist in giving up a portion, not less than a fortieth part, or two and a half percent, of their goods, to the poor. These alms go into the public treasury, and are applied, among other things, to the redemption of slaves, another subject regarding which Christians ignorantly accuse Muhammadans of a state of things which Muhammad did his best successfully to mitigate by a practical legislation towards its eventual abolition.

But, reverting to alms, in order that these be acceptable to God, the givers must show that they are in lawful possession of the gift (which, it is needless to add, can be increased beyond the legal minimum). It would not do “to rob a till in order to build a chapel”, but those who voluntarily give more than the fortieth part will be rewarded by God.

The pilgrimage to Mecca is of great importance; as Muhammadans meet there from all parts of the world, it is a bond of union, and creates a real visible Muhammadan church such as the Christian world, with its innumerable sub-divisions, does not yet possess for the assembly of an entire Christianity. It is, moreover, a great stimulus for the diffusion of culture by means of a common sacred language, Arabic, in the same way as was the case in Europe when Latin was the only language spoken by all learned persons in addition to their native tongue. Thus by knowing Arabic, one has a key not only to the Muhammadan religion but also to the heart of the whole Muhammadan world. In Asia, and even Africa, in spite of the so-called semi-barbarism, any abstract Arabic word can become the common property of all the Arabic-speaking or Arabic-revering nations, and Muhammadans thus possess an agency of civilisation and culture which is denied to other faiths.

Fasting is, of course, a mere discipline, but it is also of great hygienic value, and, as stated by the *Sheikh al-Islam*, “The fulfilment of the duties of purity and cleanliness, which are rational and also fulfil the hygienic requirements of the physician.”

Indeed, as regards Muhammadan

rules generally regarding abstention from wine, pork, improperly slaughtered flesh, the disposal of what would be injurious if not quickly made away with, etc., it may safely be asserted that they were not laid down to worry those who fulfil them, but to benefit them in body and mind.

With regard to social gradation, the rich man is considered to be the natural protector of the poor, and the poor man takes his place at the table of the rich. Nowhere in Muhammadan society is there any invidious distinction between rich and poor; and even a Muhammadan slave is not only a member of the household but also has far greater chances of rising to a position in government or in society than an English pauper.

Food is given to anyone who needs it, and charity is administered direct, and not by the circuitous means of a Poor Law system. Indeed, from a Muhammadan, as also from the Buddhist, point of view, the giving of charity puts the giver into a state of obligation to the receiver, since it enables the former to cultivate his sense of benevolence.

In the same way, among the Hindu Brahmins, when even a “sweeper” comes to ask for alms at a Brahmin’s door, the latter worships him for having afforded him the opportunity for the exercise of charity. Such a view, in my humble opinion, includes all the graces of the truest and widest Christian charity, and from that standpoint I can only say that the best Christians I ever knew were a Brahmin who had never heard the name of Christ, an old Muhammadan who revered him as a prophet, and a poor Jew who nursed through a long illness the

Christian who had deprived him of his little all. Servants, although they partake of meals after, fare exactly the same as their masters.

In a mosque there is perfect equality among worshippers: there are no pews; the *imam* of the place or any other worshipper may lead the prayers, and nothing can be a more devotional sight than a crowd of Muslim worshippers going through their various genuflections with perfect regularity and silence.

We do not seem to recognise that laws are laid down for general guidance and that the letter of such laws is not to be the lord but the servant of our interpretation of them. Above all, our abstract charity, our abstract religion, our hard-and-fast rules, are in contrast to the personal, individual, concrete, dramatic, allegorical and imaginative which characterise the Eastern faiths and forms that have been adapted by us. There would be no Nihilists and no Socialist in Europe were Western society constituted on the basis of Muhammadanism; for in it a man is not taught to be dissatisfied, as is the great effort, aim and result of our civilisation. □

They said: O our people. We have heard a Book revealed after Moses, verifying that which is before it, guiding to the truth and to a right path.

O our people, accept the Inviter to Allah and believe in Him. He will forgive you some of your sins and protect you from a painful chastisement. H.Q. 46:30-31

SIGNIFICANCE OF ASTRONOMY IN THE STUDY OF THE QUR'AN

By Dr. Shirin Haque Copilah, Department of Physics, University of the West Indies

This is the second of a two-part article which was taken from <http://www.moonsighting.com/roleofislam.html>.

The first part appeared in the September 2001 issue.

Contributions of Muslim scientists

The first verse of the Qur'an revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad implores man to direct himself towards the acquisition of knowledge:

*Read in the name of thy Lord
Who creates – creates man
from a clot, read and thy Lord
is most Generous, Who taught
by the pen, taught man what
he knew not (96:1-5)*

There are several other references in the Qur'an to astronomical feats of the universe:

*Consider those (stars) that rise
only to set (79:1)*

*Consider the heavens and that
which comes in the night (86:1).*

*Consider the sun and its radiant
brightness and the moon as it re-
flects the sun (91:1,2).*

*Consider the night as it veils (the
earth) in darkness (92:1).*

In view of the exposition given above in the light of the Qur'an, it is imperative that Astronomy should get its impetus first and foremost from Muslim scholars and scientists as it was in the early years of Islam. Sadly, this pursuit has suffered a serious decline in the last few centuries.

It is really interesting to note that Muslims were in fact the first to differentiate and separate the science of Astronomy from the pseudo-science of

Astrology. The development of Astronomy suffered a great decline and the last great Muslim astronomer was Fakhar-ud-Din Razi (d. 1228 CE). If we go back in history we see a zealous pursuit of knowledge particularly in the field of astronomy in the early days of Islam. Contributions to Astronomy by Muslim scientists included contributions to Mathematics and Physics, as these are indispensable for the study of Astronomy. If the tradition of seeking knowledge emphasised by Islam had continued, Astronomy would have flourished and undoubtedly Muslims would have been centuries ahead of the time.

Muslim scholars translated Greek works into Arabic. They also compiled encyclopaedia-like works on various subjects of science and literature. During the time of the Renaissance in Europe, these works in Arabic and those translated from Greek on Astronomy were again translated into English and other European languages. The names of stars were not translated but transliterated and that is why to date many names of stars are Arabic in origin. If one looks at any catalogue of stars, one is struck by the numerous names that appear to be Arabic in origin such as Aldabaran and Deneb. In an astronomical catalogue of almost two hundred and fifty stars, over one hundred and forty of them had names that were Arabic in origin. Muslims discovered many new stars. The book about stars by Abd al-Rahman Al-Sufi was translated into Spanish by Alfonso X el Sabio. Muslims carried out many observatory researches which were compiled in the

form of astronomical tables called *zij*. One of the leading observers was Al-Battani. The *zij* of Al-Ma'mun was studied in Baghdad, the Hakimite *zij* in Cairo. The Toledan Tables of Al-Zarqali and his associates, the *zij* of Nasir-ud-Din Al-Tusi, called *Al-Khanid*, were studied in Maraghah. The *zij* of Ulugh al-Beg in Samarqand was among the most famous Muslim astronomical tables studied and observed in those days. These tables had significant influence upon Western Astronomy up to the time of the astronomer, Tycho Brahe.

The first astronomical observatory as a scientific institution was the observatory of Maraghah in Persia established by Al-Tusi. Later European observatories in some ways followed this model. The most famous astronomical instrument, the astrolabe, was developed by Muslims to carry out further research. There existed even mechanical astrolabes perfected by Ibn Samh that can be considered as the predecessor of the mechanical clock.

Muslims also applied their knowledge of astronomy to questions of time-keeping and the formulation of calendar. This word, too, is Arabic in origin. The most accurate solar calendar existing to this day is the Jalali calendar that was developed under the direction of Umar Khayyam in the twelfth century. This is still in use in Persia and Afghanistan.

In the field of Mathematics, Muslims began by integrating Greek and Indian mathematics. The first great Muslim mathematician, Al-Khawarizmi, who

lived in the ninth century, wrote a treatise on Arithmetic that brought the Arabic numerals to the West. He is also the author of the first book on Algebra. The term “algebra” itself comes from the first part of the name of the book of al-Khawarizmi entitled *Kirah al-Jabrawal-Mujabalah*. Abu Kamil al-Shuja discussed algebraic equations with five unknowns. This science was further developed by leading figures such as al-Karaji and it reached its peak with Khayyam, who classified algebraic equations into kinds and classes up to the third degree. The brothers, Banu and Musa, who lived in the ninth century, may be considered to be the first outstanding Muslims in the field of Geometry while their contemporary, Thabit ibn Qurrah, helped in laying foundations of Integral Calculus. Muslim scholars such as Al-Beruni also developed Trigonometry and established it as a distinct branch of Mathematics. Calculus, Trigonometry and Geometry are the keystones for solving problems of Astronomy

Other Muslim mathematicians such as Khayyam and Al-Tusi examined Euclidean geometry which deals with the geometry of flat surfaces. Muslim mathematicians, specially al-Battini, Abul al-Wafa, Ibn Yunus and Ibn al-Haytham also developed spherical Astronomy. Euclidean geometry and spherical geometry are particularly useful in the overall study of geometry of the Universe and its cosmology.

The works of Ibn Sina, Abul Barakat al-Baghdadi, Ibn Bajjah and others led to the development of the idea of impetus and momentum. These principles of Physics are applied to motion of bodies in Astronomy. Another area that is important in Astronomy is Optics. It is very relevant in the development of tools for observation, like the telescope that employs lenses or mirrors. Ibn al-

Hatham (in Latin *Alhazen*), who lived in the eleventh century CE, was one of the great students of Optics between Ptolemy and Witelo. Ibn al-Hatham’s main work on Optics, *Kitab al-Manazir*, was also well known in the West as *Tesaurus Opticus*. Ibn al-Haytham studied the property of lenses, discovered the *camera obscura*, explained correctly the process of vision, studied the structure of the eye, and explained for the first time why the sun and the moon appear larger on the horizon. He puts it in very simple words. (It is so because at that stage the thicker layer of atmosphere at the horizon acts as magnifying lens compared to when they are right above us.) His studies in Optics were carried further two centuries later by Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi and Kamal-ud-Din al-Farsi. It was Qutb al-Din who gave the first correct explanation of the formation of the rainbow. Muhammad ibn Jabir al-Battani, one of the top twenty leading astronomers in recent history, praises Allah for creating such a wonderful universe which is so precise, amazing and meticulous in structure and working, in these words:

“(Astronomy) has a well-earned place among disciplines for its tremendous share in helping man calculate years and months, provide accurate time, mark seasons, observe increase and decrease in the duration of days and nights, watch locations and eclipses of the sun and the moon, witness the movements of planets in their faring in alternating places and signs. Much more may be added to it through study and scrutiny that invariably leads to further proof and knowledge of the greatness, wisdom, and power of the Creator.”

The Qur’an frequently refers to amazing feats of Astronomy being observed by man living on this tiny earth. Some aspects of the tremendous progress made by Muslims in this field in the past have been dealt with in this article. What their forefathers did in the past in various fields of knowledge should inspire the Muslim scholars of the present time. They should strive to develop an attitude and culture to promote the pursuit of scientific knowledge and research to further harness the forces of nature for the peace and comfort of man on this earth. In the past few years, there has been a concerted effort by many enlightened Muslim scholars to use Astronomy for establishing the beginning of months. In this connection the following verse of the Qur’an should be kept in view:

The sun and the moon follow a reckoning (55:5).

The Muslim community is now taking it seriously and efforts in this direction are being organised on an international level via CFCO (Committee for Crescent Observation) which has been active since 1978. More recently ICOP (Islamic Crescent Observation Project) has also joined in. Both these organisations include members from all over the world. The object is to observe and determine the crescent not only for the months indicating the beginning and end of Ramadan, but also for the remaining months of the year. This issue has been a bone of contention among Muslims. In this connection, it would be worthwhile to refer to the words of a notable scholar of *fiqh*, Dr. Taha Jabir al-Alawi from his book, *Ijtihad*, with respect to the sighting of the moon for the start and end of the holy month of Ramadan. He emphasised the necessity of resorting to “exercise of judgement” in this regard, and said:

“It could never have been the Prophet’s intention to make life so difficult when he established that rule. He was, that time, addressing illiterate people, and the best they could do to establish the beginning of the month was to see the moon with the naked eye. They had no other means and Allah did not wish to make matters difficult or impossible for them. But when there exists more accurate instruments to determine the same fact, it would be totally unacceptable, and indeed backward-looking, if insistence is on using out-dated and inadequate methods. The message of Islam is intended for all people in all ages; it was never restricted to the first century *Hijrah* Arabs of Makkah. Therefore, to stick to the literal meaning, irrespective of the time factor, is a benighted approach which is conducive neither to enlightenment nor to progress” (*Ijtihad* (1993) published by International Institute of Islamic Thought, USA, p.27)

This awareness has brought to light that many Muslim countries have hitherto been in error in establishing the beginning of the new month. It is important that we do not follow blindly but seek to understand and adopt correct methods developed by experts. The modern era of Internet access and electronic communication provide us ample opportunities to educate and unite us in this respect.

Several different types of software are now available for calculating the dates and times of new moons, prayer times and direction of the *Qiblah*. The study of Astronomy is not something to be

afraid of – it enlightens and guides us to a deeper understanding and appreciation of our religion and recognition of the all-encompassing glory of our Creator. The Qur’an frequently emphasises the importance of using our faculty of reasoning and deduction. We need to listen to this repeated call of Allah.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad said: “Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.” This means that a Muslim should seek knowledge throughout his life. It is a dynamic process and we must continue to strive for it all the time. The Qur’an says the following in this regard:

In the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day, there are surely signs for men of understanding. Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and (lying) on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord Thou has not created this in vain! Glory be to Thee! Save us from the chastisement of the Fire (3:190,191).

Glorify the name of thy Lord, the Most High! Who creates, then makes complete, and Who measures, then guides (87:1-3). □

Poem

*Te-re faz-lon se jaan bus-taan sa-raa hai,
Te-re noo-ron se dil sham-suz zu-haa hai.
A-gar an-dhon ko in-kaa-ro a-baa hai,
Woh kyaa jaa-nen keh is see-nah men kyaa hai.*

*Tu-jhay sab zor-o qud-rat hai khu-daa-yaa
Tu-jhay paa-yaa har ik mat-lab ko paa-yaa*

*Har ik 'aa-shiq ney hai ik but ba-naa-yaa,
Ha-maa-ray dil men yeh dil-bar sa-maa-yaa.*

*Wo-hee aa-raa-m jaan aur dil ko bhaa-yaa
Wo-hee jis ko ka-hen Rab-bul ba-raa-yaa.
Ho-waa zaa-hir woh mujh par bil-a-yaa-dee,
Fa-sub-haa-nal la-zee akh-zal a-'aa-dee.*

*Mu-jhay us yaar se pay-wand-e jaan hai
Wo-hee jan-nat wo-hee daa-rul a-maan hai.
Yeh kyaa ih-saan Te-re hain me-re Haa-dee,
Fa-sub-haa-nal la-zee akh-zal a-'aadee.*

It is through Thy favours that my life is like a flourishing orchard,
And through Thy light my heart shines like the mid-day sun.
If (spiritually) blind people refuse and deny the truth
They are unaware of what is in this heart of mine

To Thee belongs all might and power, dear Lord,
When I found Thee all my desires were fulfilled.
Every lover builds an idol in his heart,
But Thou art the Beloved that lives in my heart.

Thou art the One Who gives peace to my life and happiness to my heart.
The One Who is called the Lord of the worlds.
Through His favours He revealed Himself to me,
So glory be to Thee, Who routed my enemies.

My life is inseparably bound to that Friend,
He is my Paradise, He is my abode of peace.
What a multitude of favours Thou hast bestowed on me, O my Guide,
So glory be to Thee Who routed my enemies. □

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ‘ID AL-ADHA

by Nasir Ahmad BA LL.B

After ‘*Id al-Fitr*, the second major festival of the Muslims is ‘*Id al-Adha* (Festival of Sacrifice). This festival is celebrated in commemoration of Prophet Abraham’s (peace be upon him) willingness to sacrifice his only son, Ishmael. ‘*Id al-Fitr* is generally called the “minor festival” and ‘*Id al-Azha* the “major festival”. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* has considered it as ‘*Id al-Kabir* meaning “the major festival.” The Holy Qur’an has designated it as *zibhin ‘azim* (a grand sacrifice).

Although ‘*Id al-Fitr* is celebrated after a full month’s rigorous spiritual training, while ‘*Id al-Adha* is only ten days of a sort of training-camp in the form of the Pilgrimage during which there is no bar on eating or drinking, yet the former is called the minor festival and the latter the major one.

In this ritual worship, in addition to the obligatory prayers (*salah*), there is greater emphasis on extolling Allah’s greatness and celebrating His praise, and that is why if we study the Qur’anic verses relating to *Hajj*, the words *fuzkurullah* (so remember Allah) have been used five times for this act of worship instead of the usual word, *salah*. The fact remains that, in reality, in *Hajj*, there is a continuous affirmation of *tauhid*, or the unity of Allah, and one’s complete readiness to obey Allah’s commandments. These rituals are indicative of a man’s extreme sense of servitude and perfect obedience to his Lord, and this is why this act of worship has acquired such an important position.

In this context, please also bear in

mind that a dream is always subject to interpretation, because what one sees in a dream is all-symbolic and the underlying reality may be quite different. For instance, Prophet Joseph saw in a dream that *eleven stars and the sun and the moon are making obeisance to him* (12:4). Then, during imprisonment, one of his two companions saw in his dream that he was *pressing grapes* and the other saw that he was *carrying bread on his head and birds were eating it* (12:26). Again, the king of Egypt saw in a dream *seven fat cows devouring seven lean ones, and seven green ears of corn and seven dry ones* (12:43).

Now, the interpretation of Prophet Joseph’s (*as*) dream turned out to be that his treacherous brothers, the king and other members of the ruling class ultimately bowed to his authority. To one of his companions in prison he said that he would find deliverance and would be serving the king, and the other was told that he would be hanged on the cross (12:41). Similarly, he told the king that his dream meant that there would be seven years of severe drought and famine and the way for survival was also described in the dream itself. See 12:47-49 and 12:5-6 of the Holy Qur’an.

I have made a reference to dreams and their interpretation and the events that overtook Joseph and Jacob as stated in the Holy Qur’an in order to elucidate that dreams are always composed of hints and allusions and need to be interpreted and explained. But Abraham and Ishmael were so enthusiastic and were imbued with such an extreme sense of obedience and sub-

mission to the will of Allah that they took the dream literally and got ready to act upon it.

Now, see how Allah appreciated this extremely praiseworthy resolve of Abraham - a resolve that was made in response to a difficult test set for him by Allah - and how He then rewarded him for such superb faithfulness:

Surely this is a manifest trial. And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice. And We granted him among the later generations (the salutation), Peace be upon Abraham (7:106-109).

And in the very next verse Allah gives an assurance that anyone who does noble deeds is always granted abundant reward by Him: *Thus do We reward the doers of good.* It is a living reality that this sacrifice was so highly appreciated that the memory of this act of sacrifice by Abraham and Ishmael was given eternal recognition through making it an obligatory part of the rituals of the pilgrimage. Also, two *rakahs* of *salah* to be offered at *Maqam-i Ibrahim* (the place where Abraham stood) were made an obligatory part of the ritual of pilgrimage. In addition to the making of circuits around the Ka’bah, *sa’i* (running between the two hillocks, Safa and Marwa) was also made obligatory.

The importance of this sacrifice can best be illustrated by an incident at the time of the peace agreement of Hudaibiyyah. The Holy Prophet, relying on a dream, started off for Makkah from Madinah, along with

his companions, to perform the pilgrimage but were stopped by the unbelievers of Makkah at a place called Hudaibiyyah outside Makkah. In view of the sanctity of the month, the Holy Prophet preferred to start peace negotiations instead of going to war and eventually a peace agreement was arrived at. In addition to other conditions, it was agreed that the pilgrimage should be postponed till the next year. Since the pilgrimage was not performed, the companions were not prepared to offer their animals for sacrifice. On this occasion, the Holy Prophet had his wife Zainab with him, so he consulted her as to what should be done in order to persuade them to slaughter their animals.

At this point, notice should be taken of the Holy Prophet's high regard for the intellectual capacity of the opposite sex in seeking advice from a woman. He consulted his wife regarding a very tense and delicate situation. And the credit goes to Lady Zainab for this most intelligent and beautiful piece of advice given by her:

“Sir, all the people love you extremely, so you should just quietly take your sacrificial animal to a distant spot and slaughter it. The faithful would follow suit with fervour and will be slaughtering their animals without fail.”

History bears out that that is exactly what happened. This incident not only provides proof of respect and honour shown by the Holy Prophet to women, but also proof that women are capable of giving mature advice. It also highlights the unmatched spirit of obedience of the companions, an obedience that has become proverbial in the annals of history.

And now see in what glorious words Allah appreciates and approves of this noble example of the holy companions and their spirit of submission to and cheerful acceptance of the Will of Allah. This is recorded in the Qur'an in the following words:

Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Allah (5:119).

Islam has laid down four obligatory rituals by way of worship for the spiritual and mundane education and discipline of its followers, viz., *salah* (prayers), *zakah* (poor-rate), *saum* (fasting) and *hajj* (pilgrimage). There underlies a Divine wisdom in the order of these four ritual obligations of Islam. There is no denying the fact that by acting on these four practices in all sincerity, a man can make progress both in self-purification as well as in spirituality.

These various disciplines of worship are meant for the spiritual training of man during the normal activities of his daily life, but pilgrimage is a ritual of worship which is undertaken by leaving the business of daily life, leaving behind near and dear ones, spending wealth and undergoing the hardship of journey purely for the attainment of Allah's pleasure and with a sense of complete obedience to Him. Thus wealth is spent and hardship is borne in order to achieve the highest point of worship of Allah and to attain the inner purification and spiritual exaltation that are mentioned in the verse: *Successful indeed is he who purifies himself*. In the next two verses, the reality of the worldly and other-worldly life has been elucidated and our attention has been drawn to the fact that such a spiritual training is necessary. In fact, Allah says in the

Qur'an:

But you prefer the life of this world, while the Hereafter is better and more lasting (87:16,17).

If one casts a cursory glance over these pillars of Islamic worship, it will become clear that the intention is to inculcate Allah's love in man. And the reason why the ritual of pilgrimage has been placed last in order is that this is the culmination of man's complete obedience to Allah's commands and his desire for sacrificing in His way. While performing *hajj*, one's mind is fully devoted to the remembrance of Allah and the yearning to achieve closeness to Him. In this state, the pilgrim is in such a condition of absorption and preoccupation with the remembrance of Allah that in that ecstasy even the person of the Holy Prophet is left out of his mind and one expresses one's servitude and obedience only to Allah. Please read the words of the *talbiyya*, and ponder over their meaning. While making circuits around the Ka'bah, a pilgrim's heart, mind, lips, nay, his entire person, keeps on reciting these words of praise to Allah:

Labbaika, Allahumma labbaika. Labbaika la shareeka laka. Labbaika innal hamda wan-ni'mata laka. Wal mulka laka. Laa shareeka laka. (Here I am in Thy presence, O my Lord, here I am in Thy presence! There is no associate with Thee. Here I am. Verily all praise and bounties and the Kingdom belong to Thee. There is no associate with Thee. Here I am in Thy august Presence.)

In fact, the special atmosphere that is obtained at this ritual pilgrimage, an atmosphere of total absorption and celebrating Allah's praise and extolling His name in congregation is not to be found in any other act of worship in congregation. We all know that from the day of pilgrimage till the early noon prayer on the third day of 'Id, all the Muslims of the world, wherever they may be, chant the following words extolling His name, known as *Takbir-i Tashriq*, after each of the five obligatory daily prayers:

Allah-u Akbar Allah-u Akbar. Laa ilaahu il-lal laah. Wal-laahu Akbar. Allahu Akbar wa lil-laahil Hamd. (Allah is the Greatest. Allah is the Greatest. There is none worthy of worship except Allah! And Allah is the Greatest. Allah is the Greatest. And all praise is due to Him alone.)

From the words of the *talbiyyah* (that is, *labbaika* etc.) and the *takbirs* recited during the three days (called the *tashriq* days), one can vividly visualise the intensity of devotion with which Allah's name is extolled and glorified and the fervent expression of humble bondage to Allah by Muslims in the holy precincts of the Ka'bah and all over the world.

One unique aspect of the ritual of pilgrimage is that in this exalted point of worship, no memorable event relating to the life of the Founder of Islam, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, has been included in the ritual of *hajj*. The sacrifice of an animal offered is a tribute to the spirit of sacrifice shown by Prophet Abraham (*as*) when he was ready to sacrifice his son Ishmael in obedience to the Divine command. The circuits around the

Ka'bah are made as a tribute to Abraham and Ishmael for re-building the Ka'bah. The *sa'i* (running) between the two hillocks of Safa and Marwa is a tribute to the patience and fortitude shown by Lady Hagar, the mother of Ishmael. The throwing of pebbles at Satan is a tribute to the resistance offered by Prophet Abraham (*as*) to the attempts of Satan to dissuade him from sacrificing his son, while he was taking him to the place of sacrifice.

Again, while we recite the *darud* (invoking Allah's benedictions) in favour of the Founder of Islam, the Holy Prophet (*sas*), at the end of each prayer, yet we also recite the *darud* for Prophet Abraham (*as*) with the same zest and fervour.

The fact stands out clearly that the pilgrimage is a practical demonstration of the universal concept of Islamic teachings at this exalted of worship and Allah has registered His appreciation for the sacrifices offered by Abraham, Ishmael and Hagar. They indeed offered incomparable sacrifices in the re-building of the Ka'bah and in establishing its integrity as the living centre for the worship of the One and Only Divine Being. This gesture of the universality of Islam in according respect and recognition to all the prophets raised in the world is solid proof of the Holy Qur'an that Allah raised messengers proclaiming the Unity of the Divine Being to all the nations of the world, and it was the followers who later corrupted this pure concept.

A Christian writer, Chris Horrie, in his book, *What is Islam?* (published by Virgin Books, London, England) pays tribute to the historic role played by the Ka'bah in establishing the concept of *tauhid* (Oneness of the Divine

Being) and in the struggle against polytheism in the following words:

"The Ka'bah is a cube-shaped stone building, believed to have been built at the beginning of time by Adam for the exclusive worship of Allah. The fate of the shrine is symbolically linked to Islam's battle against mankind's repeated reversion from the true religion of Allah-worship into paganism" (p.38).

Thus, the Ka'bah is a living monument to the monotheistic concept and the festival of 'Id al-Adha is a reminder to man to work continuously for the inner and outer purification of his person through spiritual discipline and training so that he should be able to lead a virtuous life. Further, he is to derive strength to empathise with others and serve them.

The rituals observed during pilgrimage furnish us with living proof of the fact that hardships undergone and sacrifices made for noble and virtuous ideals and for setting a noble example are always rewarded by God, the High. The greater the sacrifice, the greater and more abiding shall be the recompense.

May Allah give us the strength to tread along the path of righteousness and to do good to others. And may He also enable us to inculcate within us a spirit of submission and sacrifice in obeying His commandments. This is the important lesson that 'Id al-Adha tries to convey to us for leading a better and virtuous life. May Allah bless all of us. □

1. **Q. What is Jihad?**

A. *Jihad* is an Arabic word which means “striving hard” or “exerting oneself to the best of one’s power and ability.”

The Holy Qur’an frequently uses the word *jihad* when urging Muslims to strive hard.

2. **Q. What kind of striving does the Holy Qur’an mention?**

A. The Holy Qur’an mentions the following purposes for which a Muslim should strive hard:

- (i) To attain nearness to Allah, by struggling to overcome bad desires.
- (ii) To stick to Islam under difficult circumstances, for example, when facing persecution.
- (iii) To assist in the defence of the Muslim community when it is attacked by an enemy who seeks to destroy it.
- (iv) To take the message of Islam to others by devoting one’s time and money to the cause.

3. **Q. What are some of the passages of the Holy Qur’an that illustrate the above?**

A. The word transmitted as “striving” in the following references is *jihad*:

- (i) *Those who strive hard towards Us, We certainly guide them in Our ways* (29:69). In

this verse, Allah says that He guides to the right ways those who strive hard to reach Him. This is the *jihad* to improve oneself by doing good and suppressing bad desires.

- (ii) *To those who flee after they are persecuted, then strive hard and are patient, surely your Lord after this is protecting, merciful* (16:110). This verse speaks of Muslims who were persecuted in Makkah and who had to flee their homes. Their *jihad* was to remain patient and steadfast while facing severe difficulties.

- (iii) *Allah has made those who strive with their property and their lives, to excel by a high degree those who hold back* (4:95). This verse refers to the war that was fought by Muslims, and says that those who strove by giving their wealth and their lives for that cause hold a higher rank than those who held back.

- (iv) *Strive against them* (the unbelievers) *a mighty striving with it* (the Qur’an) (25:52). Here Muslims are told to undertake a **mighty jihad** against the unbelievers by taking the Qur’an to them so that its evidence, arguments and beauty may convince them of the truth of Islam. □

Not those who have incurred Thy displeasure nor those who have gone astray. “Al-Fatihah” verse 7.

Those who have incurred Divine displeasure are the Jews and those who went astray are the Christians. The Jews became such formalists that they totally disregarded the spirit of the commandments. The Christians emphasised the spirit so much that they utterly disregarded the form and discarded as superfluous the Divine commandments that served as beacon lights and guides to reality. They adopted esoteric interpretations of everything and assumed that all of these had found their fulfilment in the Messiah. Both groups stumbled into misguidance being caught up in two extremes. The Holy Quran reconciles the two extremes and teaches moderation (Al-Hakam, Jan. 24, 1903).

In the word of Allah, the Jews have been named: Those who incurred Divine wrath. They exalted the form and disregarded the inner reality. The Christians have been named: Those who have gone astray. They disregarded the form and lost the way; for, the form is a model and a lamp for the spiritual. One who gives up the model misses the way. In *Surah Fatihah* the reference to those who incurred Divine wrath and those who went astray points clearly to those two extremes of these two groups (Al-Hakam, Jan. 24, 1903). □



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Also published on the Internet at the

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Printed by:

HEM Enterprises Ltd.

93 Calcutta Rd. No. 4,

Carapichaima, Trinidad.

Tel: 673-0085/0630