

An after thought: All those who appeared in the recent 2012 Olympic games did not just turn up and start performing on the day. They had been practising hard, day after day, for years beforehand, to be fit to appear. There is a lesson in this about praying during Lailat-ul-Qadr.

Lailat-ul-Qadr

by Zahid Aziz

- 1 Surely We revealed it on the Night of Majesty —
- 2 And what will make you comprehend what the Night of Majesty is?
- 3 The Night of Majesty is better than a thousand months.
- 4 The angels and the Spirit descend in it by the permission of their Lord — for every affair —
- 5 Peace! it is till the rising of the morning.

This is chapter 97 of the Holy Quran about the Night of Majesty or Power, *Lailat-ul-Qadr*. This was the night, falling in the last ten days of Ramadan, when the Quran was revealed. It means that in that night the Quran *began* to be revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, at the age of forty years, when he was in the cave of Hira. The beginning of revelation came after his intense spiritual exertions by means of prayer and meditation, to find the truth about life and existence. The Quran was revealed to *his heart* by the descent of angels and the Spirit (i.e. the angel Gabriel). As it says:

“And surely this is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. The faithful Spirit has brought it, on your heart that you may be a warner, in plain Arabic language.” — 26:192–195

As revelation commenced in the month of Ramadan, hence Islam instituted fasting in this month as a commemoration and anniversary of the revelation of the Quran.

The start of something new, the beginning of a new phase of life, is marked as a turning point. *Lailat-ul-Qadr* marks the appearance of the Quran, its birth, in the world. Christians commemorate the birth of Jesus at Christmas. In Islam the birth of the Quran is commemorated in the month immediately preceding *Id-ul-Fitr*.

The coming of the angels on that night is a spiritual experience, which people perceive and behold according to how much they have **striven beforehand to purify themselves and open their hearts** to receive the angels.

It is **not** the case that praying during just this night is going to bring reward equal to, or more than, prayers of a thousand months. A thousand months is 83 years literally, or close to the life span of man. If a person exerts himself or herself throughout Ramadan, which has as its climax *Lailat-ul-Qadr*, and brings about some permanent change for the good within himself or herself, it is better than spending a

whole life of 83 years in which no change is brought about. Remember that if you change your life *from some point onwards*, it is as if you had changed the *whole* of your life, not just the *rest* of your life.

Saints and holy people see illumination on this night with their spiritual eyes. Lesser people find their hearts attracted to prayer and to concentration in devotion. The angels act on the heart and bring about peace in it. In the biography of Maulana Muhammad Ali, Mr Nasir Ahmad Faruqi relates that once he asked the Maulana if he had ever experienced *Lailat-ul-Qadr*. The Maulana said:

“Yes. Once in Dalhousie I was saying *tahajjud* prayers during the last ten days of Ramadan. When I was reciting *At-tahiyat*, suddenly a very bright light appeared in the window. At first I thought that on the road below some people were passing carrying gas lamps, but then I realized that no one would be out in these backwoods at 3 a.m. Then I looked through the window to see what the light was, and saw that it was illuminating even the trees on the mountain far ahead. That scene disappeared as I watched it. Then it occurred to me that it was the illuminations of *Lailat-ul-Qadr* that Allah had shown me.”

(Dalhousie is a mountainous town in India where people from the Punjab, including Maulana Muhammad Ali, along with some other members of the *Jama‘at*, used to spend the summer months.)

Mr Faruqi further relates:

“Once in Karachi in 1950, again during the last ten days of Ramadan, it was the night of the 29th. During *tahajjud* prayer I found myself deeply engrossed and felt as if my soul was melting away at Allah’s threshold. I was in the state that I did not want to rise up from *sajda*. During the pre-dawn meal, where the Hazrat Maulana was also present, I said to him that I thought this night had been the *Lailat-ul-Qadr*. He replied:

“I think so as well. Last night when I was saying the *Isha* prayer, after reciting the *Fatiha* the verse *inna anzalna-hu fi lailat-il-qadr* came again and again to the tip of my tongue but I recited some other verses. During *tahajjud* just now, when I was reciting the *darood*, suddenly a light spread in front of my eyes. I looked up and saw that the sky and the clouds were illuminated by this light. After a short while this scene disappeared.”

(*A Mighty Striving*, pages 520–521)

Time of Holy Prophet Muhammad

Apart from being a night in the last days of Ramadan, *Lailat-ul-Qadr* can also be considered as the whole period of the mission of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. It was a time of the deepest darkness, in which the Quran was revealed, borne by angels. The angels also descended on the hearts of the Muslims in that period, purifying them and strengthening their faith. The true believers are spoken of as follows in the Quran:

“These are they into whose hearts He has impressed faith, and strengthened them *with a Spirit from Himself...*” — 58:22

At the end of this period of the Holy Prophet’s work, there was a dawn in the world and spiritual peace in the hearts. The great spiritual and moral progress that Muslims made during this period — the giving up of evil habits, practices and customs, in an instant in some cases — **no aspect of it** could have been achieved even in a thousand months outside the blessed period of the Holy Prophet.

***Lailat-ul-Qadr* of our time**

Apart from the above two interpretations, there is also another sense in which we could say that there is a *Lailat-ul-Qadr* of our Movement now. There is in the world today a time of deep darkness for Islam. To the ordinary eye the future prospects for Islam do not seem bright as there are two major evils prevailing and dominating: the outside forces who have a wrong picture of Islam before them and the internal forces who also have a similar wrong concept of Islam. It is also a period of darkness for our Movement, facing so many dangers and threats of all kinds to its existence. But this night also has the quality that we can see in it light and guidance brought to us by angels in the form of the picture of Islam presented by this Movement.

Seeing that light, we realise that this night will give way to the dawn of Islam, especially in Western countries. A person who has faith in this, serves Islam by the strength of that faith, as did Maulana Muhammad Ali and Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din. How much greater is the faith of that person who can see the coming dawn of Islam than that of those cannot see it and hence are not motivated to take Islam to the world? Others will believe it when they see it, by which time they will have missed the opportunity of service of Islam. This is the comparison between one night and 1000 months, that is: 30,000 times. Service to Islam in this age is worth 30,000 times what it will be then. The faith of one who believes now in the eventual spiritual triumph of Islam is 30,000 times the faith of one who doesn’t believe in that triumph and hence does not work for it by using his or her time, energy and money. It was through this faith that Maulana Muhammad Ali produced his literature on Islam and Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din created his Working Muslim Mission, during an era when Muslims in general considered it an utterly futile work to present Islam to the world.