



The Light — U.K. edition

October 2006

The Lahore Ahmadiyya monthly magazine from U.K.

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Assalamu alaikum:

Id-ul-Fitr: Tuesday 24th October 2006

Prayers starts at 11.00 a.m.

Iftaris on Saturdays on:

**September 30th,
October 7th, 14th and 21st.**

Regular activities:

Darus-i Quran and Hadith:

Every Friday at 2.30 p.m.

Meetings of the Executive:

First Sunday of every month at 2.00 p.m.

Meeting of the Jama'at:

First Sunday of every month at 3.00 p.m.

Teachings of Islam on fasting

Importance of self-reform and abstention from base desires

1. "O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil." — The Holy Quran, 2:183.

2. Allah says: "And when My servants ask you (O Prophet) about Me, surely I am near. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me, so they should hear My call and believe in Me that they may walk in the right way." — 2:186.

3. "And swallow not up your property among yourselves by false means, nor seek to gain access thereby to the authorities so that you may swallow up other people's property wrongfully while you know." — 2:188.

4. "He who does not give up uttering falsehood and acting according to it, God has no need of his giving up his food and drink." — The Holy Prophet Muhammad.

5. Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights, and explained it by saying: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:2-4). Moses also fasted forty days and forty nights (Exodus 34:28).

Purpose of fasting in Islam

1. To develop and strengthen our powers of self-control, so that we can resist wrongful desires and bad habits, and therefore “guard against evil” (see extract 1 above). In fasting, by refraining from the natural human urges to satisfy one’s appetite, we are exercising our ability of self-restraint, so that we can then apply it to our everyday life to bring about self-improvement.

2. To attain nearness and closeness to God so that He becomes a reality in our lives. As we bear the rigours of fasting purely for the sake of following a Divine commandment, knowing and feeling that He can see all our actions, however secret, it intensifies the consciousness of God in our hearts, resulting in a higher spiritual experience (see extract 2 above).

3. To learn to refrain from usurping other’s rights and belongings. In fasting we voluntarily give up even what is rightfully ours; how can then we think of taking what is not ours but belongs to someone else? (See extract 3 above.)

4. Charity and generosity is especially urged during Ramadan. We learn to give, and not to take. The deprivation of fasting makes us sympathise with the suffering of others, and desirous of alleviating it; and it makes us remember the blessings of life which we normally take for granted.

Fasting in Islam does not just consist of refraining from eating and drinking, but from every kind of selfish desire and wrong-doing. The fast is not merely of the body, but essentially that of the spirit as well (see extract 4 above). The physical fast is a symbol and outward expression of the real, inner fast.

Fasting is a spiritual practice to be found in all religions (see extracts 1 and 5 above). The great Founders of various faiths (Buddha, Moses, Jesus, etc.) practised quite rigorous fasting as a preliminary to attaining their first experience of spiritual enlightenment and communion with God. This kind of communion is indicated in extract 2 above.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad on fasting

“People are unaware of the true nature of fasting. The fact is that no country or realm can be described if one has not been there. Fasting is not just the state of remaining hungry and thirsty. Its nature and effect can only be discovered by experience. The human makeup is such that the less food is consumed the greater is the purification of the soul and the development of the powers of inner

vision. God’s purpose is that you should reduce one kind of food (physical) and increase the other kind (spiritual). The person fasting must remember that the aim is not simply to remain hungry; he should be engrossed in the remembrance of God so as to attain severance from worldly desires. The object of fasting is that a person should abstain from the food which nourishes the body and obtain the other food which satisfies and brings solace to the soul. Those who truly fast for the sake of attaining to God, and not merely as a custom, should be absorbed in the praise and glorification of God, and in meditating upon His Unity.”

Maulana Muhammad Ali on fasting

“The real purpose of fasting is to attain righteousness. A person who undergoes hunger and thirst, but does not behave righteously, has done nothing. If someone is told the aim and object of doing a certain duty, and he does that duty but does not attain the required aim and object, it is as if he has not done that duty.”

Prayers during Ramadan urged by Maulana Muhammad Ali on our Jama‘at

In the month of Ramadan Maulana Muhammad Ali used to exhort the Jama‘at to undertake a spiritual exertion (*mujahida*) in two forms. One was to fall in prayer before God and beseech Him tearfully in *tahajjud* prayers to enable us to carry out the work of the propagation of Islam and the Quran, and the other was to make financial sacrifices. In this connection he has written many heart-felt, moving prayers in his articles and *khutbas* published in *Paigham Sulh* and entreated every member of the Jama‘at that at least in the month of Ramadan they should treat the *tahajjud* prayer as obligatory for them.

Some prayers that he urged upon the Jama‘at are given below. These begin with a verse of *Sura Fatiha*, which is followed by a prayer based on the meaning of the verse.

Al-hamdu li-llahi Rabb il-‘alamin — ‘All praise is for Allah, the Lord of the worlds’. O God, You have provided the very best means for the physical development of human beings. Now **provide for Your creation spiritual nourishment through the Quran**, as they have moved far off from You and are lost in darkness, racing towards destruction. Acquaint their hearts with the bliss that is attained by bowing at Your threshold.

O God, Who granted the Holy Prophet Muhammad and his Companions unique success, enabling them to transform the destinies of entire

countries and nations, **foster and nourish us and our Jama'at today** to make it reach the pinnacle of success in spreading the Quran and propagating Islam in the world. Let the foundations for the propagation of Your religion **be laid by our hands**, upon which an edifice continues to be raised till the Day of Judgment.

Ar-Rahman-ir-Rahim — 'The Beneficent, the Merciful'. Your mercy is so boundless that it is aroused even without humans asking for it. It is by Your mercy that the efforts of human beings come to fruition. By Your beneficence **provide guidance** through the Quran to those who are engulfed in darkness. **Make successful our insignificant efforts**, that we may take Your holy message to these people.

Maliki yaum-id-din — 'Master of the day of Judgment'. O God, we are Your humble, unworthy servants. There are shortcomings in us, in myself, in my Jama'at. Sometimes Your orders are even disobeyed. By means of Your authority of judgment, **forgive our faults and infringements**, and let them not be obstacles to the success of our efforts.

Iyya-ka na'budu wa iyya-ka nasta'in — 'You do we serve and You do we beseech for help'. We serve You and wish to exalt Your name in the world. This is the sole aim of our lives. But we are small in numbers and weak while the task is mammoth. We who are exhausted, weak, humble and sinful, beg only You for help. **Grant this Jama'at the success** which You bestow on people who spread Your name in the world.

Ihdi-nas-sirat al-mustaqim, sirat-allazina an-'amta 'alai-him — 'Guide us on the right path, the path of those upon whom You bestowed favours'. You have been showering Your servants with the greatest favours. You have never let those fail who made it their aim in life to exalt Your name. Guiding us on the straight path, **confer on us the same favour** which You granted to those before us. **Blow the breeze of Your help** upon us as You made it flow for them and **open the doors of Your bounty** upon us in the same way.

Ghair-il-maghdubi 'alai-him wa la-ddallin — 'Not those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor those who go astray'. O Master, let it not be that we make worldly gain to be our objective and give up spreading religion, as is the state of the general Muslims today, or that we become misguided and destroy our powers for the sake of following exaggerated, wrong beliefs, as some are doing.

Another prayer by Maulana Muhammad Ali

"O God, Your Holy Word that was revealed for the guidance of the world is not being spread even by its believers. But it is Your promise that You will make it prevail in the world. We too heard the voice of one who came to call to Your message (Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad), and our feeble hands came forward to take this great burden. It was this voice which revived our dead hearts. But our Jama'at is like an ant facing the mountain of unbelief. It is Your promise that has strengthened our hearts. We need Your help above all. We know we are unworthy and not fit to receive Your help, but, O God, Your religion, Your Quran and Your Prophet are deserving of Your help. Let help for them be today manifested through our hands, may Your light illuminate our dark hearts, and may we witness with our own eyes the fulfilment of Your promise."

— From *Mujahid-i Kabir*, Urdu biography of Maulana Muhammad Ali, pages 267–270.

Women and education

by Habiba Anwar

[Note: This talk was presented at our Family Day gathering in Darus Salaam, London, on 6th August, by one of our young, enthusiastic members in the presence of Hazrat Ameer Dr A.K. Saeed.]

I recently came across a short article that I would like to share. It is titled: *Women in Islam and Education*. Usually when I read articles regarding women in an Islamic context, they tend to be written from a very staunch feminist perspective, some almost verging on the anti-male! But I particularly enjoyed this article because it focuses on a woman's obligations as well as her rights. And since we are celebrating a 'family day' at this August's monthly meeting, I thought it would be appropriate to share it with you, since women hold some of the most important roles in a family. I have also added a few things to it. It starts with the following hadith:

"To seek knowledge is a sacred duty on every Muslim, male and female."

If anyone goes on his way in search of knowledge, God will thereby make easy for him the way to paradise. The first and most crucial obligation on you as an individual is to acquire knowledge. Correct knowledge must come before correct action. It is impossible to be a Muslim, to live according to the requirements of Islam and at

the same time live in a state of ignorance. Knowledge is connected in Islam with worship. The acquiring of knowledge *is* worship. Reading the Quran and pondering upon it *is* worship. Travelling to gain knowledge *is* worship. The practice of knowledge is connected with ethics and morality; with promoting virtue and combating vice; with enjoining right and forbidding wrong. Knowledge pursued and practiced with modesty and humility leads to beauty, dignity, freedom and justice.

As Muslim women, we should strive to become learners. Our education must not stop with a mere certificate. One of the greatest gifts of Islam has been the gift of literacy. The first revelation of the Holy Quran began with the word "read". I quote to you chapter 96, verse 1:

"Read in the name of your Lord..."

As women, we must be aware that we are the most influential and emotionally charged beings in society. We are daughters, we are sisters, we are wives and we are mothers. Women can be the main architects in fabricating our society. But we women are sometimes not even fully aware of our potential. History has told us that in the early days, girl children used to be buried alive. Today of course it is a different reality. The roles of women are numerous, and this is something we should be actively taking advantage of.

In the farewell sermon of the Holy Prophet, may Allah's blessings be upon him, he said:

"O people! your wives have certain rights over you and you have certain rights over them. Treat them well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers."

A woman has the right to develop her talents and to work within the limits of Islam. Islam views a husband and wife as complementary to each other, neither dominating the other. Each has his or her own individual rights and duties. Yet they exist harmoniously to create stable families in society. Women need to be educating themselves with the present situation. Do not live in a warped time zone. Time is moving. It is changing. Whilst we should not compromise the basic tenets of Islam, we need to grow. We are living in a technologically advanced era. We are living in a global village. Almost every home today has a telephone, internet access, TV, radio, access to newspapers and magazines, etc. All of these are means of education. This is not the time to say "we know enough!" We must be constantly empowering ourselves. We should always be prepared to accept a challenge.

Education is the only true ladder to true success. When everything else fails in life, your education stays. Together with our faith, we can change the course of fate. A stable home is one in which the mother is stable. Under trying circumstances she can always devise ways and means to circumvent disastrous times. Her family members see her as exemplary. How can we move on when we stagnate ourselves, when we incarcerate ourselves? Education *is* a woman's liberation. None of this implies that we need to compete with men; nor do we have to resort to putting ourselves on display or adorning ourselves to attract the opposite sex. Unfortunately, many disagree with this. However, an educated woman can assist so many others by being a good example. She can be a guiding light, motivating, inspiring and assisting others to forge their way into a successful straight path. Education helps us to distinguish between right or wrong.

If we continue to live a life of ignorance, seclusion and darkness, we will only paint a one sided picture. We need to move out, to move on! We should not be like chattels or property belonging to someone else. We should love ourselves, have confidence and build self esteem. Too often women are branded as "less" than men and we perpetuate that feeling. But in Islam, there is absolutely no difference between men and women as far as their relationship with Allah is concerned. Both are promised the same reward for good conduct and the same punishment for evil conduct. The Holy Prophet Muhammad said:

"Women are the twin halves of men."

The Holy Quran also emphasises the essential unity of men and women in chapter 2, verse 187:

"Your wives are (like) a garment for you and you are (like) a garment for them."

In conclusion, we must realise that the success of a society can be traced to the mothers who raised its children. The first and greatest influence on a person comes from the sense of security, affection and training received from the mother. Therefore, a woman bearing children must be educated and conscientious in order to be a skilful parent. Sisters in Islam, be life long learners.

The Muslim Prayer Book *with CD-ROM*

The *Muslim Prayer Book* is available from the U.K. Jama'at with a computer CD which plays the sounds of all the prayers given in the printed book. Each syllable is pronounced distinctly for clarity.

Qadiani Jama'at Translations contradict their own beliefs

But will they notice it?

by Zahid Aziz

During August 2006, the Qadiani Jama'at has published on its website www.alislam.org English translations of the books *Asmani Faisala* (Heavenly Decree or Heavenly Judgment) and *Nishan Asmani* (Heavenly Sign) written by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in 1891 and 1892, shortly after he claimed to be the Promised Messiah. What the translators and publishers have perhaps not noticed is that their own beliefs about the claims and status of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement are entirely contradicted by what he has written in these books. Full details are discussed below.

The book *Asmani Faisala* is a response by Hazrat Mirza directed in particular at two of the leading Muslim *Ulama* who were in the forefront of issuing rulings against him declaring him as *kafir* and unbeliever (namely, Maulvi Nazir Husain of Delhi and Muhammad Husain Batalvi). It applies also to other Muslim clerics and spiritual leaders who supported such rulings. Hazrat Mirza writes in this book that previously, in response to their rulings calling him *kafir*, he had issued clear statements affirming that he holds all those tenets of faith that are required of a Muslim and denying that he entertains certain false beliefs ascribed to him by his opponents, for which they declared him as an unbeliever. He goes on to say that his opponents should have accepted his statements that he is a Muslim. But as they have not, he is now offering to prove that he possesses certain spiritual attainments that are only bestowed by God in great measure upon a true believer; for example, acceptance of prayers. This would show that, far from being a *kafir*, he is a Muslim of the highest spiritual standing according to heavenly criteria.

Having set the background, I list below the ways in which the Qadiani doctrines about his claim are contradicted by this book. In all quotations hereunder, the above-mentioned translations published by the Qadiani Jama'at are used.

1. He has quoted in this book those statements about his beliefs that he had been earlier publishing. Referring to one of these statements, he now writes:

“With deep humility and modesty I made it clear that I am not a *kafir*; that Allah knows I am a Muslim, and I believe in all the articles of faith which the *Ahl-e-Sunnah wal*

Jama'at profess, that I believe in the *Kalimah, La ilaha ill-Allah, Muhammad-ur-Rasulullah*, that I face the Qibla when praying, **that I am not a claimant to Prophethood and that, in fact, I consider such a claimant to be outside the pale of Islam.**” (p. 6 of the translation; the bolding is ours)

The last words above, which we have printed in bold, are a plain contradiction of the Qadiani belief that Hazrat Mirza claimed to be a prophet. He even regards any such claimant as falling outside the religion of Islam.

2. Not only has he denied, without reservation or condition, claiming to be a prophet, but we also find that nowhere in this booklet has he mentioned that there is some particular type of prophethood that continues among the Muslims which he has acquired, as believed by the Qadiani Jama'at.

3. He has clearly stated his claim of being *mujaddid*, as opposed to prophet, as follows:

“You are wrong to imagine that instead of sending a *Mujaddid* at the head of the century, the God of heaven and earth has sent instead a *kafir*” (p. 49).

4. Regarding the announcements he issued in response to the charge that he was a *kafir*, Hazrat Mirza says:

“I published three posters in Delhi, declaring, again and again, that I am a Muslim, and Islam is my faith ... I believe with all my heart and soul in all the tenets of Islam and abhor everything to the contrary.” (p. 5)

Thus, according to Hazrat Mirza, if a person makes declarations of faith like the above then these are *quite sufficient* by which any person should be recognised as a Muslim by other Muslims. But the Qadiani Jama'at does *not* accept this Islamic principle which he has invoked here. They do not regard a person making such declarations to be a Muslim unless he, in addition, acknowledges the prophethood of Hazrat Mirza.

5. He writes that even after he published these declarations and:

“I again submitted with all due respect that I was not a *kafir*, and that I believed in all the tenets which Allah has prescribed for Muslims” (p. 8),

still the Head of the *Ulama*, Maulvi Nazir Husain of Delhi, did not relent and continued to call him *kafir*. Hazrat Mirza adds:

“If only he had the slightest of fear of God in him, he should have withdrawn this fatwa of *kufir* against me when I issued the announcement about my being a Muslim and declaring my Islamic beliefs. He should have owned up his error publicly and given clear testimony to my faith in Islam with the same zeal as he had shown while announcing me to be an apostate before the crowd.” (p. 8)

Thus what he is saying is that if a religious leader had been branding someone as *kafir*, and in response that person issues declarations of being a Muslim, then that religious leader must publicly admit his error “with the same zeal” that he showed in branding him as *kafir*. Now it has been observed in recent years that the Qadiani Khalifas, after proclaiming for several decades that other Muslims are *kafir*, have been quietly and half-heartedly backtracking from this long-held stand. But if the above statement of the Promised Messiah is to be followed, then what the Qadiani Khalifas must do is to admit publicly their former error in calling other Muslims as *kafir*, and admit it as vigorously as they were calling them *kafir*.

6. Hazrat Mirza also writes about the same Head of the Ulama:

“I wrote to him, time and again, that I do not oppose him in any of his beliefs except that of the Messiah being physically alive.” (p. 9)

This indicates that, according to Hazrat Mirza, the primary difference in belief between him and the Ulama who called him *kafir* was that he believed that Jesus had died while they believed that he was still alive. But, as everyone knows, the primary difference between the Qadiani Jama‘at and other Muslims is the issue of whether Hazrat Mirza was a prophet or not.

7. As is evident from this book, Hazrat Mirza is trying to prove to these Ulama that he is a Muslim because they were using the pretext that, in their eyes, he was not a Muslim in order to refuse to debate with him the issue of the death of Jesus. If Hazrat Mirza was a prophet, why was he trying to prove that he was merely a Muslim and a believer in Islam, and why was he wishing to engage the Ulama in a debate on the death of Jesus as being the substantive and basic issue? He should be trying to prove that he is a prophet, and this is the issue he should be challenging the Ulama to debate with him.

Nishan Asmani

Turning to the second book, *Nishan Asmani* (The Heavenly Sign), written and published a few months later in 1892, this book also contains clear statements contradicting the Qadiani Jama‘at stand that he claimed to be a prophet. Below we quote two extracts from it, in the words used in the Qadiani Jama‘at translations:

“I know with perfect certainty and it is my firm belief that our Prophet (sa) is Khatamul Anbiyya. No Prophet, new or old, will come after him and not an iota or tittle of the Quran will be abrogated. Yes, *Muhaddath* will come, who have converse with Allah, the Exalted, and in whose persons certain characteristics of Perfect Prophethood are manifested. Indeed, in certain respects, they have the very grace and dignity of Prophethood, and I am one of them. But these religious clerics have failed to comprehend my reasoning.” (p. 52 of translation).

“But now, by the grace of God, this is the eleventh year since I proclaimed to be the *Mujaddid*, the Like of the Messiah, and Recipient of Divine Revelations. Is this not a Sign? If I were not from Him, how could I have survived a full decade, which is a considerable period of man’s life?” (p. 61)

His claim of being a *muhaddas* (meaning a saint who receives revelation but is not a prophet) and *mujaddid*, as well as his view that no prophet at all can come after the Holy Prophet Muhammad, are expressed here so unambiguously and categorically that no comment from us is necessary.

The ‘change in 1901’ theory

Since the year 1914 up to now, whenever the Lahore Ahmadis have presented extracts such as the above to the Qadiani Jama‘at leaders and spokesmen, they have trotted out the explanation that when Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad expressed these views in the 1890s he was *making a mistake about his claims* and was actually a prophet *without realising that God had made him a prophet*, and that in 1901 he issued a correction stating that he was not just a *muhaddas* but was in fact a prophet. Thus they say, as indeed they have told me in my discussions with them on the Internet, that his “pre-correction” statements must be considered as obsolete and superseded by his writings after 1901. This explanation is so baseless, apart from being bizarre and absurd, that it seems they only bring it out for use in discussions with us. The rest of the time this embarrassing reply is kept locked away in

storage, as if carrying the warning label: “For use only against Lahoris”.

If this theory of ‘claim corrected in 1901’ is right, why have they not mentioned it in the Foreword by the Translator that has been provided in both of these translations? A warning should have been issued to the readers that wherever in these books Hazrat Mirza has denied claiming to be a prophet, claimed instead to be a *muhaddas* and *mujaddid*, affirmed that no prophet can come after the Holy Prophet Muhammad, and called as unbeliever anyone claiming to be a prophet after the Holy Prophet, all such declarations are in error and were later superseded by the opposite.

It genuinely gives us great happiness to see that these translations have been published. Now the members of the Qadiani Jama‘at themselves need to read these with an enquiring mind and examine whether their belief that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed to be a prophet can at all be justified. Unfortunately, the words ‘enquiring mind’ and ‘examine’ represent concepts which are totally alien to the spirit that has been carefully nurtured in their Jama‘at for over ninety years.

‘Virgins’ in Muslim paradise

The misconceived notion that every Muslim male who reaches paradise in the hereafter, for good deeds done in this life, will be rewarded with seventy-two virgins has brought Islam into disrepute and ridicule. It has also proved a source of much amusement and mockery for those unaware of the teachings of Islam regarding the hereafter. In this article we cannot enter into a detailed discussion of the Islamic concept of paradise or the garden of the next life but the following key points are necessary to know.

Firstly, the rewards of the hereafter are not the material things that we enjoy in this physical world. The life after death is in a world that cannot even be conceived by the human mind in this life, and human beings there will have an entirely different existence that cannot be known here. The Holy Quran says:

“We have ordained death among you and We are not to be overcome, that We may change your state and make you grow into what you do not know.” — 56:60–61.

Other English translations phrase the second part of this quotation as “changing the nature of your existence and bringing you into being anew in

a manner as yet unknown to you” (Muhammad Asad), “producing you again in a form which ye know not” (Rodwell), and “that We may transfigure you and make you what you know not” (Pickthall).

The enjoyments in the gardens of the hereafter are of an unknown nature in this world, as the Quran says:

“No soul knows what refreshment of the eyes is hidden for them: a reward for what they did.” — 32:17

This is why the description of the garden of the hereafter is called a parable, as in: “A parable of the garden which is promised to those who keep their duty” (13:35 and 47:15).

Secondly, the Quran has made it abundantly clear no less than *eight* times that men and women are equally entitled to the rewards of the heavenly life. Four such extracts are as below:

“And whoever does good deeds, *whether male or female*, and is a believer — these will enter the Garden ...” — 4:124

“Allah has promised to the believers, *men and women*, Gardens, in which flow rivers, to abide in them, and goodly dwellings in Gardens of perpetual abode.” — 9:72

“O My servants, ... Those who believed in Our messages and submitted (to Us): Enter the Garden, *you and your wives*, being made happy. ... in there is what their souls yearn for and the eyes delight in, and in them you will abide.” — 43:68–71

“On that day you will see the believers, *men and women*, their light gleaming before them and on their right hand. Good news for you this day! Gardens in which flow rivers, to abide in them.” — 57:12

Thus the women among the believers will have the same rewards and enjoyments as the men of the believers.

Thirdly, all these rewards are manifestations of the good qualities shown and good deeds done by a person in this life, which are unfolded before him or her. For example, the “light gleaming before them and on their right hand” (57:12) is not a physical lamp of this world, but a representation of their light of faith. In one place we read:

“And those who believe and do good are made to enter Gardens, in which flow rivers, abiding in them by their Lord’s permission. Their greeting therein is, Peace! Do you not see how Allah sets forth a

parable of a good word as a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches are high, yielding its fruit in every season by the permission of its Lord?" — 14:23–25

After mentioning the gardens of the next life, a good word is compared to a good tree, ever bearing fruit. Therefore the trees of the gardens of the hereafter are a person's good deeds done in this life which appear as trees that bear fruit, just as his good deeds bore fruit.

Likewise, the so-called beautiful maidens of the next life are not as women of this world with whom men will have sexual relations. They are the good qualities shown in this life, such as honesty, purity of character, charity, integrity, modesty and faith that are manifested in this form. These maidens are called "pure companions" (2:25, 3:15, 4:57) because they are the appearance of the pure qualities that were one's companions in this life.

In fact, in verse 3:15 the desirability of the "pure companions" is clearly differentiated from the sexual desire for women in this life. Verse 3:14 refers to the attractiveness of the material desires of this world as follows:

"The love of desires is made attractive to people — *of women* and sons and hoarded treasures of gold and silver and well-bred horses and cattle and crop produce. This is the provision of the life of this world. And with Allah is the good goal of life."

The next verse then says:

"Shall I tell you of *what is better than these?* For those who guard against evil are gardens with their Lord, in which rivers flow, to abide in them, *and pure companions* and Allah's goodly pleasure." — 3:15

It is clearly obvious from these passages that while sexual desire for women is a craving and a necessity for this material world, better and superior than this is to strive to acquire the qualities that become our "pure companions" in the next world. This repudiates the very idea that we should wish for our physical desires of this world to be satisfied, as a reward, in the next world.

In many recent articles, published on websites and elsewhere, a saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad from Tirmidhi is quoted, often by way of ridicule and mockery, according to which a man in paradise will have 72 "wives", these supposedly being the 72 virgins. But in the same Tirmidhi we find, only a little later, the following report:

"Faith has seventy and something gates, the least of which is to remove from the road a harmful thing and the highest is to say 'There is no god but Allah'." — *Tirmidhi*, chapters on *Faith*.

It is the "seventy and something" constituents of faith, two of which are mentioned here (and one often mentioned in such reports is modesty) that, for those who possess them in this life, become represented in the next life as "maidens".

There is also another explanation of the concept of "virgins" in the next world, based on the following verses of the Quran which refer to some of the rewards to be found there:

"Surely We have created them a (new) creation, so We have made them virgins, loving, equals in age..." — 56:35–37.

The pronoun "them", occurring twice here, is in the feminine. A commonly-accepted meaning is that this refers to the believing women. They will be raised in the next life in a new form of creation corresponding to their purity of character in this world, and thus it is said: We have made them virgins. This interpretation is also supported by an explanation of these verses reported from the Holy Prophet Muhammad, again in the same Tirmidhi:

"An old woman came to the Prophet and said: Messenger of Allah, pray to Allah that I will enter paradise. He said jokingly: Mother of so-and-so, no old women will enter paradise. The old woman went away crying, so the Prophet said: Tell her that she will not enter paradise as an old woman, for Allah says: Surely We have created them a (new) creation, so We have made them virgins." — *Shama'il Tirmidhi*, ch. 35: 'Joking of the Messenger of Allah', report number 230.

Their resurrection as "virgins" is only a spiritual representation of the purity with which they led their lives in this world. There is no question of sexual relations in the next life as that life is not physical life which requires such relations.

It may be noted that the term "virgin" has been used in the Bible as a symbolism. The nation of Israel is called a "virgin" in many places (for example, Jeremiah, ch. 31, Amos, ch. 5). The Gospel of Matthew contains the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, which Jesus begins to relate as follows: "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins" (ch. 25, v. 1). Obviously, virgin girls for men's pleasure are not meant here.