

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



100 years of Sadr Anjuman Ahmadiyya

Created December 1905

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore (U.K.)

The first Islamic Mission in the U.K., established 1913 as the Woking Muslim Mission

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Next Meeting

Assalamu alaikum

Venue: *Darus Salaam*

Date: **Sunday 6th November 2005**

Time: **3.00 p.m.**

Talk by Mr Shahid Aziz

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.

Contents:

News: Pakistan earthquake	1	British Muslims "do not understand Quran"	5
Ramadan moon sighting article and response	2	What fasting means to a Muslim	6
Message for peace	3	A poem for Ramadan	8
Social Justice by Jalal ud Din, Fiji	4	King Faisal at the Woking Mosque	8

News

Pakistan earthquake

Members have been donating to the collection organized by the U.K. Jama'at for onward transmission to our Centre in Lahore for use in relief and aid work to help the victims of this natural calamity. More than 1500 Pounds have been raised.

As happens when such terrible disasters strike, the question was being discussed in the media that if there is a loving God, how can such loss of life and destruction take place? From the Islamic point of view there are several aspects of the matter, which we can only touch on

here. It is a loving God Who, at such times, fills our hearts with sympathy and the overwhelming desire to help our fellow-beings, even to help those who otherwise may be our enemies. It is a loving God Who has granted humanity as a whole vast enough resources to go to the aid of those among them who are suffering. Then it is up to mankind to determine whether or not to use those resources for disaster prevention measures and ameliorating the effects of disasters. God gives us an opportunity to exercise and develop our humane qualities.

The occurrence of a disaster is said to make some people question the existence of God. But would they

accept the existence of God if no disaster ever took place? If no calamities ever befell, there would be no concept of what a disaster is. No one would be saying: we believe in God because no disasters are taking place, since the very word 'disaster' or 'calamity' would not exist!

Disasters and catastrophes have to be faced and coped with, whether one does or does not believe in God. Giving up belief in God because disasters occur will not reduce the incidence of such calamities. On the other hand, belief in God provides one with strength to bear a loss and hope for recovery and restoration. In a discussion on television in the aftermath of this earthquake, an

atheist said that according to his outlook these events are just a part of the working of natural phenomena. We do not dispute that, but wonder whether this makes him look upon this world as a terrible place, hostile to human beings. A believer in God considers nature to be helping in the progress of man. He knows that God has made everything around him to be on his side, and not against him, provided he walks on the right path. He is certain from his faith that better days are sure to come.

We now put before our readers some verses of the Quran to ponder on this topic.

“No disaster befalls in the earth, or in yourselves, but it is in a book before We bring it into existence — surely that is easy to Allah — so that you grieve not for what has escaped you, nor exult in that which He has given you. And Allah loves not any arrogant boaster, such as are mean and enjoin miserliness on men.” — 57:22–24.

The “book” mentioned here is the knowledge of God, and when man acquires knowledge of nature by human efforts the books he compiles are a reflection, however incomplete it may be, of that “book” of Divine decrees. Even books produced by man can, to some extent, give prior knowledge of a disaster.

“And We shall certainly try you with something of fear and hunger and loss of property and lives and fruits. And give good news to the patient, who, when a misfortune befalls them, say: Surely we are Allah’s, and to Him we shall return.” — 2:155–156.

Islam teaches in these few words that everything we have is on loan from God and eventually returns to its Real Owner.

“Everyone on it (the earth) passes away, and there endures forever the person of your Lord, the Lord of glory and honour.” — 55:26–27.

Everything is temporary and the one permanent reality is the existence of God Whose glory is manifested in all events.

Our Ramadan moon sighting article and response to it

At the beginning of Ramadan the A.A.I.L. (U.K.) published a brief note on this topic after Saudi Arabia, and most countries in the Middle East, declared the first day of Ramadan as Tuesday 4th October, 2005 under the claim that the new moon had been observed on Monday evening. We pointed out that Muslim moon-sighting websites (moon-sighting.com and hilal-sighting.com) had announced beforehand, on the basis of astronomical data, that it would be impossible to see the moon anywhere in the world on Monday evening, although the birth of the new moon had taken place at 10.27 GMT on Monday.

Here we make clear that we have no objection to anyone starting Ramadan on Tuesday (while we started on Wednesday), but what is highly objectionable and quite improper is for the false claim to be made that this date was set due to the moon being sighted on Monday. They should say plainly that they follow the time of the birth of the new moon (which can only be known by calculation, not observation), and don’t wait for its visibility. If they declare this, they would be doing a service to the Muslim world, and we would also follow the date announced by them.

Regrettably, this is another of those many instances of trying to pander to the ignorant, obsolete thinking of the religious leaders. The authorities of those countries dare not say that their determination is based on the birth of the new moon and not on its visibility to the human eye, lest they incur the wrath of the religious circles. So they maintain a false pretence that the moon was seen. We are condemned as going against Islam for suggesting that moon sighting by eye is not necessary, yet those who invent false sightings to cover up the fact that they don’t rely on seeing the crescent are regarded as the authentic Muslim authorities.

When our published note was circulated, the following two were among the responses from our Jama’ats around the world.

From Suriname, Khaliel Ghafoerkhan wrote:

“ In our country Suriname, Eid ul Fitr is a National Holiday. Every year the Government of Suriname is facing the same problem to predetermine the Hilal and consequently the Holiday. The Majlis Muslimeen (of which we are not a member) advises the Government on the basis of astronomy and reckoning two weeks before Eid ul Fitr. However, many of their members also prefer to see the moon!

The Sunni majority also use their naked eyes to see the lunar crescent and sometimes they ignore seeing the moon only not to start fasting on the same day with us (SIV-Lahore)!

As a result, every now and then, we have two days of celebrating Eid: a National Holiday and the next day! We cannot agree with you more that they bring Islam and themselves into ridicule.

We compliment you for the correct way the UK Jama’at predetermines the new moon. Imagine that the world would start New Year on Jan. 2 or 3! What chaos would be on earth! But Muslims have no qualms to start a new month after 24 to 55 hours. This time we had our first Taraweeh-prayers on Monday, Oct. 3 and we commenced fasting on Tuesday Oct. 4.”

From Guyana, Mansoor Baksh:

“ In Guyana we have a similar problem. However the Ahmad-iyya Jama’at uses calculations to determine the beginning of Ramadan. It was Maulana Kemal Hydal from Trinidad who did extensive research in this field. Through close contact with him and Maulvi Rasheed the Guyana Ahmadiyya Jama’at was able to establish itself as the Jama’at that correctly predicts the appearance of the New Moon.

When I got involved in making the calendar for the Anjuman that tradition continued. I started using Mooncalc, a computer program

available on the Internet to calculate the appearance of the new moon and Islamic dates.

The Ahmadiyya Jama'ats in Guyana sometimes (though very rarely) have Eid on different days from the others. They rarely see the moon for the first day of Ramadan but they hardly miss it on the first day for Eid. So we would normally start a day before but we usually end on the same day.

According to our calculations this year, Ramadan began on Wednesday October 5, 2005. Our first Tarawih was on Tuesday, 4th October, 2005. I think it is time now for the Ahmadiyya Jama'at globally to start and finish Ramadan on the same dates."

Message for peace

by S. A. Rehman

(Note: We received an article circulated by e-mail to many Muslim organizations by the above author, most of which is reproduced below by his permission. We are including it because we agree with its general spirit.)

God forbid if any one of our near ones and dear ones is killed then the killer is evil, a beast and what not and should get penalty but if one among us kills anybody then he is not evil and we start lying, denying or even justifying the killing — double standards?

Being Muslims, many of our brothers and sisters are not working for peace. They are misguided, mistaken and spreading the virus of hatred and revenge through telling deliberate lies, disinformation and false accusations, which is resulting in death and miseries for numbers of innocent people living around the world at the hands of merciless killers and also bringing bad name to Muhammad (PBUH) who never killed anyone in his life time.

Instead of teaching about Good & Evil, certain Radical Muslim Clerics are only "Trading in Religion". They teach us about accusing, abusing and killing the non-Muslims. They try to

hypnotize us to Hate and Kill the non-Muslims and brethren of other sects or be killed; and without using any commonsense we readily believe in whatever is being said by these Hate Mongers. Actually, they are "Agents of Satan" who is paying them heavily and in return they are cutting at the very roots of the *Ummah*. Instead of "Mourning", many of the Muslims are rejoicing on the brutal killings of the non-combatant innocent civilians and "The Murderers" always claim to be "Our Great Heroes".

Before it is too late and the Curse of God falls upon us, we should use commonsense, find out the **truth** and must change ourselves to save Muslims from becoming the most "Hated, Isolated, Discredited and Suspicious" people in the world. We must start working for promoting "Sectarian Harmony and Religious Tolerance" in the society and should prove to the **world** through our deeds that Islam is not a religion of Zero Tolerance and Muhammad (PBUH) teaches "Love & Peace" and not Gangsterism, Terrorism, Barbarism, Extremism, Sectarianism, Cruelty, Inhumanity and "Hatred & Killing" of the innocent civilians.

Islam is a religion of peace. Islam teaches respect and love for all, even the animals. But many narrow-minded Muslims have so far failed to learn anything good from the teachings of Muhammad (PBUH) who preaches love for the peoples of all religions. We are far away from the basic principle of Islam, i.e. "Enjoining the people to do Good and forbidding them from doing Evil" and thus possess no quality of the civilized society. Unfortunately, many of us show Zero Tolerance towards others and remember only one thing to be called as good Muslims and that is to "hate" the non-Muslims — an act of madness.

The killing of others in the name of religion is a Sin. Can a **father** ever teach his Children to be the permanent Enemies of each other?

The time has come for us to stop readily believing in whatever is being said, read and written by the Hate Mongers. Unfortunately, some misguided Muslims believe that the

Holy Quran and Holy Prophet (PBUH) both have instructed Muslims that the opponents be killed and that they are simply following the orders. We should use our own commonsense and only believe that which is logical, convincing and in the best interest of humanity.

Why do we hate others so much, may be they are better humans than we are. My feeling is that the Muslims should unite to discredit and deactivate the fringe mullahs (Preachers of Hate) who promise a quick trip to paradise to people who have little and sacrifice themselves with bombs strapped to their bodies. If the mullahs thought that it really was a way to paradise they would be strapping bombs to themselves! Their followers are kept too ignorant to see this for themselves and enlightened Muslims should educate them. We must promote understanding and peace. We are all watched by the same God and need to help one another, not hate and hurt.

We must stop dividing the world into Muslim and non-Muslim blocks. All the disputes facing the Muslim world can be resolved easily, only if we (the Muslims) are able to condemn the "Philosophy of Hate" created in us by our past and present elders who have divided the peoples of the world in the name of religion, caste and creed.

We need to preach love, kindness and humanity with great devotion and mission. The mullahs and the preachers of hatred must be excommunicated at every level. Our political leaders and religious teachers must offer positive ideas. Without the ability to imagine a better world, we cannot build anything together. What is offered today through religion is death, destruction and suffering.

My prayer for peace

Merciful God, please give to peoples of the world the required wisdom and determination, to Forgive and Forget the bitterness of the past and learn to live in peace like brothers and sisters, by condemning the divisions and hatreds created in us by our past and present elders. (Amen)

Social Justice

Talk by Jalal Ud Din, Fiji

Editor's Note: The author, a member of our Jama'at in Fiji, presented this paper at the Fiji Interfaith Search. He writes to us:

"The Interfaith Search had a gathering of mainly Christian groups, and some Hindu and Muslim groups to discuss the theme 'Social Justice'. This came about as there is some discussion amongst Christian groups that people who commit treason should be forgiven and allowed to lead a normal life. A Bill on this matter is before Fiji Parliament. Religious groups were invited to attend but limited to a 2 x A4 page presentation and 30-minutes talking that should reflect the religious and scripture material regarding social justice. I did both. The venue was the Anglican Church and the event was held on Sunday 18 September 2005. The paper was very well-liked and much commented upon and this was true to the characteristics of Lahore Ahmadiyyat."

The text of the talk now follows.

"In civilised life, law floats in a sea of ethics," wrote Earl Warren, Chief Justice, US Supreme Court, on 12 November 1962. If any society does not have ethics on human values and social justice, it is certainly a very shallow society, driven by basic animal instincts. Social justice has been preached and practised by God's Messengers¹ to bring about a quality of life that differentiates people from animals.² Once people are given to enjoy acceptable quality of life, they will

appreciate that God's love and compassion³ goes out to all people, regardless of ethnicity.⁴ People should appreciate that God provided distinct variety in almost every way – including varieties of people and cultures.⁵ Social justice also raises the question: Who is your neighbour? In proper and honest discharge of peoples' rights and privileges, it also comes to consideration, that all people are not endowed with similarities. There are some people who need assistance, such as being dependant on charity. This should come about regardless whether the beneficiary is of same ethnicity.⁶ On the contrary, history unfolds that oppression has been practised for centuries without any regard for social justice. We have scripture accounts of Hebrews enslaved in Egypt.⁷ They were suffering without social justice and the main cause of their suffering was the simple fact: They were Hebrews and not Egyptians.⁸ The Egyptians were indigenous communities and Hebrews were settlers in Egypt. The consequence of atrocities that the Egyptians inflicted against the Hebrews has gone down in history.⁹

In any country of this world, people must have rights to believe in God and practice any religion whatsoever.¹⁰ In addition to having rights of worship, there must also be gender equality. Often we see women getting marginalized. This should not be so and women have equal rights to social justice.¹¹ Children are similarly marginalized and they are not advantaged to fend for their rights. This therefore concludes that due recognition must be given to rights of all people under a central governance¹² of democratic administration.¹³ Respecting rights and dignity of the individual becomes a natural expectation. Tolerance is an issue that differs from community to community. Some people are more tolerant and some are lesser. It does not conclude that since a community is more tolerant then they are doomed to be marginalized.¹⁴ Hurting another society because that other society is better at whatever skills is a most deplorable situation. This happens in many societies as seen regularly in

oppressed, these it is against whom there is no way (of blame)."

¹⁰ Holy Quran, 22:40: "Those who are driven from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is God. And if God did not repel some people by others, cloisters, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which God's name is much remembered would have been pulled down. And surely God will help him who helps Him. Surely God is Strong, Mighty."

¹¹ Holy Quran, 2:228: "And women have rights similar to those against them in a just manner..."

¹² Holy Quran, 42:38: "And those who respond to their Lord and keep up prayer, and whose affairs are (decided) by counsel among themselves, and who spend out of what We have given them."

¹³ Holy Quran, 42:42-43: "The way (of blame) is only against those who oppress men and revolt in the earth unjustly. For such there is a powerful chastisement. And whoever is patient and forgives — that surely is an affair of great resolution."

¹⁴ Holy Quran, 38:26: "O David, surely We have made thee a ruler in the land; so judge between men justly, and follow not desire, lest it lead thee astray from the path of God."

¹ Holy Quran, 57:27: "Then We made Our messengers to follow in their footsteps, and We made Jesus son of Mary to follow, and We gave him the Gospel. And We put compassion and mercy in the hearts of those who followed him."

² Holy Quran, 4:135: "O you who believe, be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for God, even though it be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives — whether he be rich or poor, God has a better right over them both."

³ Holy Quran, 110:3: "Celebrate the praise of thy Lord and ask His protection. Surely He is ever Returning (to mercy)."

⁴ Holy Quran, 5:2: "And let not hatred of a people ... incite you to transgress. And help one another in righteousness and piety, and help not one another in sin and aggression, and keep your duty to God."

⁵ Holy Quran, 12:38: "And I follow the religion of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. This is by God's grace upon us and mankind, but most people give not thanks."

⁶ Holy Quran, 46:35: "So have patience, as men of resolution, the messengers, had patience, and seek not to hasten on for them (their doom)."

⁷ (1) Exodus 1-14. (2) Holy Quran, 7:100-141.

⁸ Holy Quran, 20:130: "So bear patiently with what they say, and celebrate the praise of thy Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting, and glorify (Him) during the hours of the night and parts of the day, that thou mayest be well pleased."

⁹ Holy Quran, 42:41: "And whoever defends himself after his being

media and documented by the United Nations. Perhaps, the atrocities given to hurt the Hebrew community in Egypt before Moses rescued them, the holocaust against Jews in Germany in WW II and the ethnic cleansing of Muslims in Bosnia recently are vivid memories of situations where social justice was no longer recognised and practised.¹⁵ Forgiveness should be exercised if forgiveness¹⁶ will mend the matter and do well to the wrongdoer himself.¹⁷ However, the golden rule is that evil must be requited by punishment proportionate to the intensity of the harm done. Reconciliation is the other side of the equation that proposes that justice must be seen to be done.

What does my religious tradition understand social justice to mean? It is understood to mean human values in fairness, equality, recognition of existence of other ethnic groups to live in a harmonious multi-cultural mix in which no one society claims superiority over the other groups.

What are the theological and scripture understandings that form the basis of my organisation's response to social justice? These have already been discussed at length in the deliberations given above. All prophets came from God as Ambassadors with same Divine Messages. Successive Messengers clarified same fundamental issues to suit modern civilisations.

Is religion used to maintain situations of injustice? Does religion justify injustices? Religion was never meant to project injustice of any kind. Some religious and some political leaders have taken

advantage of the sensitivity of religious beliefs to incite recognition of ethnic differences.

What efforts are being made to overcome injustices? In what ways is your organisation involved in social justice? Globally, this society's religious leaders are taking recognition to obvious ethnic polarisations in some parts of the world and giving further recognition that unscrupulous political leaders are using religion to gain political mileage. The society's leaders are using excerpts from scripture to build bridges of understanding between different religious and ethnic groups, to eradicate disunity and promote equality and fairness to all.

“Many British Muslims do not understand the Quran”

Article in 'The Guardian'

In *The Guardian* (daily newspaper, London) an article on 15 July 2005 carried the sub-heading as above. Written by one Ehsan Masood, it shows convincingly that both the Muslim extremists who advocate violence in the name of Islam and the anti-Muslim opponents of Islam use exactly the same distortions of the Quran and Hadith to prove that Islam urges its followers to physically attack all unbelievers. The writer then adds:

“Not one Muslim commentator I know has bothered to tackle this issue with the forensic detail it demands.”

And why not? Because, says the writer:

“... it is incredible, but most non-Arab British Muslims do not understand what is in the Quran. Children in British Muslim families are taught to recognize Arabic letters from a young age, and can even recite Arabic words fluently; but few have any grounding in the language, which means they have no idea what it is they are reading.”

The result is that when the Muslim militant organizations or their counter-part anti-Islamic groups “use isolated sentences from the Quran to argue that the faith is a violent one, few Muslims (including imams) have the detailed knowledge of Quranic history to set the record straight”, says the writer.

The author goes on to write:

“ The situation is not much better in the rest of the Muslim world. Sunni seminaries, in particular, encourage scores of young men to memorize the entire Quran and the recorded words of the prophet (known as Hadith).

This emphasis on rote learning stems in part from the widespread belief that simply reciting words from the Quran will put you in God's good books and reserve your place in heaven. Meaning and context are a secondary, and neglected, matter.

In many (particularly south Asian) households, copies of the Quran are found not on bookshelves, but carefully wrapped in bespoke cloth covers and perched on an elevated surface such as the top of a wardrobe. This is in keeping with the idea that the Quran is a sacred object, rather than a book to be read and engaged with. ... And many Muslim biographers have helped to perpetuate the myth of Muhammad as a warmonger by concentrating on his military successes, which occupied a small part of his 23-year ministry.

All of this needs reforming, and will take time.”

We agree with the writer but wish to point out that the publications of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement do “tackle this issue with the forensic detail it demands”, as he wishes to see, and have been doing so for more than ninety years in this very country of U.K. By making translations of the Quran with commentary and analysis available, this Movement has done more than any other to dispel the idea that the Quran is only to be treated as a sacred object, and not as a book to be read, studied and understood.

¹⁵ Holy Quran, 60:8: “God forbids you not respecting those who fight you not for religion, nor drive you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly. Surely God loves the doers of justice.”

¹⁶ Holy Quran, 42:40: “...but whoever forgives and amends, his reward is with God. Surely He loves not the wrong doers.”

¹⁷ Holy Quran, 2:109: “But pardon and forgive, till God brings about His command. Surely God is possessor of power over all things.”

What Fasting means to a Muslim

by Nasir Ahmad, B.A., LL.B

(Editor's Note: This was a talk delivered in the middle of Ramadan this year at Darus Salaam, London.)

We are passing through the second 10 days of the blessed month of Ramadan. A well-known hadith of the Holy Prophet (*sas*) is often repeated in this month which mentions that the first 10 days are a source of Allah's mercy, the second 10 days a source of forgiveness and the last 10 days grant one freedom from sin.

We can enjoy Allah's mercy, blessings and freedom from sin only when a believer makes special effort to derive these blessings by keeping fast, offering special prayers besides the five daily prayers, reciting the Divine guidance revealed in the form of the Quran and acting in a more charitable way in one's behaviour, dealings and gestures. Though it is a month like any other month but it is also special in the sense that the final Divine guidance was revealed in it. Allah offers special mercy and acceptance of prayers for those who supplicate with a sincere and devout heart. This month is special as during this very month the wonderful spiritual exercise of Fasting was enjoined to earn mercy, forgiveness and blessings of Allah. This month is special only for those who make special effort to gain spiritual progress and attain humane qualities. This month is special as Allah has promised to award special acceptance to prayers supplicated during this month as we find it in the Quran: "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). This month is special in the sense that all Muslim men, women and children are charged with spiritual fervour, from one end of the world to the other and in that vast atmosphere of spirituality, generosity and kindness, a person gets a unique opportunity of inspiration which is not possible on other days or months

of the year. It is a special month as during the last ten days of this month we make special efforts and offer special prayers to feel the spiritual ecstasy of the *Lailatul Qadr*, the Night of Majesty, the auspicious day when the Final and Glorious Quran started its revelation — the unique Divine Gift to mankind.

In this way an ordinary month gains a special grace and we should make every possible effort to attain those spiritual blessings promised for this month and pray to Allah that He may enable us to continue with the effort during the rest of the months. And in this way we can add to the blessedness of this month.

Allah has given us a golden formula in the Quran for making progress in our spirituality and nobility. It is mentioned in these words:

"Surely good deeds take away evil deeds." (11:114)

So Islam does not tell us to believe in an atonement, but exhorts us to make effort in doing good deeds so that in this way we not only are saved from committing evil deeds, but bring wholesome change in our attitude, actions and relations with our fellow beings.

The blessed month is passing. Fifteen days have already gone. Let us grab this special offer of Allah and make efforts to derive maximum spiritual benefits out of it and pray that it may continue embellishing our lives during the rest of the year.

In Islam, fasting, as an institution, is made a spiritual, moral and physical discipline of the highest order. By making it a permanent feature of the Islamic mode of worship, it has given a new dimension to the concept of fasting as against the concepts and practices found in other religions. This spiritual exercise purifies one's inner self and gives right direction to one's thoughts and actions. Allah has also taught us a prayer to this effect in the Opening Chapter of the Quran for seeking such guidance in these words: "*Ihdi-nas siraatal mustaqeem*," that is, guide us on the right path. Thus, all ideas of distress, affliction and sin associated with

fasting previously have been negated.

The true objective of fasting has been made plain in the verse which I recited in the beginning which states *la'-alala-kum tattaqun*, that is, "that you may guard against evil." This word *tattaqun* is derived from *ittiq*. It means "the guarding of a thing from what harms or injures it, or the guarding of self against that of which the evil consequences may be feared" (Raghib). The word has also been freely used in the Holy Quran in the sense of fulfilment of duties, as stated in Ch. 4, verse 1:

"And keep your duty to Allah, by whom you demand one of another your rights and to the ties of relationship."

Numerous verses of the Holy Quran clearly show that the *muttaqi* is the person who has attained to the highest stage of spiritual development. And, as the object of fasting is for one to be a *muttaqi*, the conclusion is evident that the Holy Quran enjoins fasting as one of the important spiritual and physical exercises enjoined to inculcate in him the highest sense of responsibility and fellow feelings. Without going into the details of objectives to be achieved by a Muslim through the teachings of Islam and various modes of worship prescribed, let us see how the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*sas*) strictly followed the commandments of Allah which have been attested to by Allah in the words:

"*Wa umirtu li-an a-koona awaalul musli-meen*" (And I am commanded to be the foremost of those who submit) — 39:12.

See how through these moral and spiritual disciplines enjoined by Allah the Holy Prophet (*sas*) attained such excellent virtues that Allah acknowledged them in these memorable words:

"*Wa inna laka 'alaa khuluqin a-zeem*" (And surely thou hast sublime morals) — 68:4.

All the spiritual exercises and commandments enjoined in the Holy Quran or demonstrated in the practice of the Holy Prophet (*sas*) are primarily meant to mould and guide

a Muslim to attain perfect righteousness or *taqwa*. Mere ritual performance is of no consequence unless it is done with utmost submission and devotion. Muslims who think that mere ritual observance will bring them spiritual reward should ponder over the verses of Ch. 107 of the Holy Quran which beautifully summarises the primary objective and condemns those who observe the ritual and do not care to follow the spirit:

“Hast thou seen him who belies religion? That is the one who is rough to the orphan, and urges not the feeding of the needy. So woe to the praying ones, who are unmindful of their prayer! Who do good to be seen and refrain from acts of kindness” (107:1-7).

In this chapter, the word *al-ma'oon* has been explained by Bukhari as meaning “every good or kind deed”. And it is added by the commentators of the Quran that its highest form is obligatory *zakat* of 2½% paid annually on the accumulated wealth for the benefit of weaker sections of the society and its lowest form is lending of a thing or giving away of any useful thing to another (*Bukhari*, 65:107).

Thus this chapter not only mentions some primary acts of charity meant for the welfare of the weaker sections of the society but it also points to the caring for those areas of human relationship which are usually ignored as insignificant. In the latter case, small sacrifice or service rendered strengthens mutual relationship and generates love and affection between individuals bound by bonds of blood, friendship or neighbourhood. It may be noted that this chapter happens to be one of the very early Makkan revelations and thus it shows how much importance Islam attaches to bonds of love and affection for the needs of the near and dear ones. It does not leave our duty to verbal exhortations such as “love thy neighbour,” but it prescribes how to offer help and show concern for those in need.

Coming back to the commandment relating to fasting, the verse says: “*Wa a'lal la-zee-na yu-tee-qaona-hoo fidya-tun ta-'aa-mu mis-*

keen,” meaning: “And those who find it extremely hard may effect redemption by feeding a poor man” (2:184). Here, on the one hand Allah exempts one who finds it extremely hard to keep the fast, but still commands him to feed a needy person. In other words, concern and sympathy for a needy person is the prime object of keeping the fast and that objective cannot be ignored or done away with even if one cannot keep the fast.

At another place in the Holy Quran, Allah explains that good acts or righteousness should result in a wholesome change in one's mode of thought and such a person should be more humane, more responsible, more humble and more generous in his behaviour towards his near and dear ones in particular and the members of the society in general. Listen to the words of Allah about what is expected from a *muttaqi*:

“It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteous is the one who believes in God, and the Last Day, and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and gives away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask and to set captives free and keeps up prayer and pays the poor-rate; and the performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in the time of conflict. These are they who are truthful; and these are the *muttaqoon*” (i.e. those who keep their duty) — 2:177.

In another chapter of the Holy Quran, called *The Believers*, the following characteristics have been enumerated of a believer whom Allah gives the assurance of success and enjoying the pleasure of Allah:

“Those who are humble in their prayers, who shun what is vain, who act for the sake of purity, who restrain their sexual passions, who are keepers of their trusts and covenants, who keep a guard on their prayers — these are the heirs who shall inherit the Paradise” (23:1-11).

Still further in the chapter *The Family of Amran*, we come across

some more characteristics of a *muttaqi* or a perfect believer:

“O you who believe, devour not usury ... Those who spend in ease as well as in adversity and those who restrain their anger and pardon men. And Allah loves the doers of good to others” (3:130-134).

In 2:177 while enumerating the characteristics of a *muttaqi*, Allah has also mentioned the fundamental principles of faith such as belief in Allah, the Last Day, angels, the Book and the Prophets. This again points out that faith and performance of worship should necessarily result in good and charitable acts.

It also tells us that all previous religions and prophets followed the same path. It will be worthwhile to know what Prophet Jesus and other prophets said about righteousness.

Prophet David (*as*) said:

“For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness” (Psalms 11:7).

Prophet Moses (*as*) said:

“And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us” (Deut. 6:25).

And Prophet Jesus (*as*) said:

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6).

Elsewhere in the New Testament, Prophet Jesus (*as*) said:

“For I say unto you, that except your righteousness, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:20).

Again, Prophet Jesus, in a prayer addressed to God, said:

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, for ever” (Matt. 6:13).

Books of Hadith are replete with the characteristics of a perfect believer. Among these numerous narrations, we find one most beautiful saying of our beloved Holy Prophet Muhammad (*sas*) that “he has been sent to accomplish the most excellent morals.”

The Holy Prophet (*sas*) is also reported to have said:

“The best of you are those who have the most excellent morals.”

The Quran also says about it in the same strain:

“Surely the noblest of you with Allah is the most dutiful of you” (49:13).

Before I conclude my talk, I would like to quote another hadith of the Holy Prophet (*sas*) which describes the nature of responsibilities which a Muslim owes to his family, to his fellow beings and to the society at large. It has been recorded in *Bukhari* in these memorable words:

“Every one of you is a ruler and every one of you shall be questioned about those under his rule; the king is a ruler and he shall be questioned about his subjects; and the man is a ruler in his family and he shall be questioned about those under his care; and the woman is a ruler in the house of her husband, and she shall be questioned about those under her care; and the servant is a ruler so far as the property of his master is concerned, and he shall be questioned about that which is entrusted to him” (*Bukhari*, 11:11).

This month-long spiritual exercise is undertaken to develop a high sense of obedience to the commands of Allah and service to one’s fellow beings. A Muslim should prove to the world that the way fasting is observed by him brings noble change in his attitude and behaviour, and increases in him a high sense of responsibility and compassion. This spiritual exercise should also ingrain in a Muslim’s mind that he is to continue his efforts in his daily life to fight against his physical urges in order to achieve noble ideals in life. This continuous effort, in the terminology of the Quran, is called a *jihad*, and in the words of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*sas*), it a greater *jihad* than going to the battlefield.

May Allah enable us to achieve these noble objectives and prove to the world that a Muslim is a peace-loving citizen and a compassionate friend. I conclude with a prayer:

O Allah! Help those who help the religion of Muhammad (*sas*) and count us among them. And O Allah! Disgrace those who disgrace the religion of Muhammad (*sas*) and do not make us of those.

O Allah, Help the cause of Islam and the Muslims. O Allah, Grant success to the cause of Islam and the Muslims.

A poem for Ramadan

Recited by
young Irfaan Ahmad

(Note: This poem was recited at the Ramadan gathering at Darus Salaam, London, 15th October 2005.)

We all must fast in Ramadan,
Which is one of the five *Arkan*,
It is a blessed month you know
We fast for Allah, not for show.

It’s designed to make us think,
As we refrain from food and drink,
We feel the hunger and the pain,
And much there is for us to gain.

From dawn till dusk we fast,
Hoping that our *Sawm* can last,
While we try to do much good,
Building *Taqwa* like we should.

Special prayers we say at night,
And turn to Allah in our plight,
To forgive and guide us as we try,
While ourselves we purify.

And remember it was in Ramadan,
When Allah revealed the Holy Quran,
And so began the Prophet’s call,
A guide and mercy to us all.

And the night of *Qadr* is unique,
Its blessings all believers seek,
Then will follow the day of ‘*Id*,
A truly festive day indeed.

Fasting teaches discipline too,
And self-control for me and you,
As year by year we train to be,
Better Muslims, by Allah’s decree.

(From *Muslim Poems for Children*
by Mymona Hendricks)

King Faisal at the Woking Mosque

Most of us must have seen that photograph of the then Crown Prince Faisal (later King of Saudi Arabia from 1964 to 1975) visiting the Woking Mosque, with the Imam Maulana Aftab-ud-Din Ahmad standing alongside, which has been printed in this Bulletin and elsewhere before. We now have access to the report of his visit that was published in *The Islamic Review* in its May 1939 issue. The photograph and the report are now on the Woking Muslim Mission website at the page:

www.wokingmuslim.org/pers/faisal.htm

We learn the following facts from the report. The visit took place on Sunday 19th February 1939 and was hosted by “the Muslim Society in Great Britain”, whose Chairman, Ismail de-Yorke, read out the address of welcome. Faisal had visited the Mosque previously as well. The purpose of Faisal’s visit to the U.K. was to represent Saudi Arabia at the Palestine Conference in London, “on the outcome of which rests the fate of our co-religionists in Palestine”, adds the report.

Over two hundred persons assembled to welcome him as he arrived at the Mosque in his royal car. “The press photographers rushed forward. Cameras clicked as the Princes stepped out of the car”. Maulana Aftab-ud-Din Ahmad conducted the guests into the marquee. The welcome address paid tribute to the services to Islam of King Saud for improving the facilities for pilgrims going for the Hajj. The address ended with the prayer that Allah may “enable you to so steer the course of the forthcoming discussion as to make the justice and reason of the Arab demands evident even to the most hostile section of the British politicians and incline the Palestine question to a solution satisfying to the Arab World”.

Among those present were: Lady Headley (Lord Headley having died in 1935), the Prime Minister of Iraq Nuri-al-Said, and Sir Feroz Khan Noon who later held high political office in Pakistan.