

Paigham-E-Haqq

MESSAGE OF TRUTH

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat-I-Islam (Lahore) Fiji
(Ahmadiyya * Society for the propagation of Islam)
(* The term Ahmadiyya is derived from the name of the
Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) whose other name was Ahmad)

Our humble plea to the reader is not to let your prejudice cloud your views towards our Movement but to consider these articles in a cool and dispassionate manner.

“Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with people in the best manner.” (Holy Quran 16:125)

In the spirit of the above-cited verse, this periodical attempts to dispel misunderstandings about the religion of Islam and endeavors to facilitate inter-faith and inter-denomination dialogue based on reason and rationality.

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The main objective of the A.A.I.I.L is to present the true, original message of Islam to the whole world - Islam as it is found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, obscured today by great misconceptions and wrong popular notions. Islam seeks to attract the *hearts and minds* of people towards the truth, by means of reasoning and the natural beauty of its principles. *Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad* (d.1908), our Founder, arose to remind the world that Islam is:

International: it recognizes prophets being raised among all nations and requires Muslims to believe in them all. Truth and goodness can be found in all religions. God treats all human beings equally, regardless of race, nationality or religion.

Peaceful: Allows use of force only in unavoidable self-defence. Teaches Muslims to live peacefully under any rule which accords them freedom of religion.

Tolerant: Gives full freedom to everyone to hold and practice any creed or religion. Requires us to tolerate differences of belief and opinion.

Rational: In all matters, it argues use of human reason and knowledge. Blind following is condemned and independence of thought is granted.

Inspiring: Worship is not a ritual, but provides living contact with a Living God, Who answers prayers and speaks to His righteous servant even today as in the past.

Non-sectarian: Every person professing Islam by the words *La ilaha ill-Allah, Muhammad-ur rasul-ullah* (There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) is a Muslim. A Muslim cannot be expelled from Islam by anyone.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad taught that *no* prophet, old or new, is to arise after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, *Mujaddids* will be raised by God to revive and rekindle the light of Islam.

About Ourselves

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore has branches in many countries including:

USA	Guyana
UK	Australia
Holland	Canada
Indonesia	Germany
Suriname	India
Trinidad	South Africa
	Philippines

Achievements:

The Anjuman has produced extensive literature on Islam, originally in English and Urdu, including translations of the Holy Quran with commentaries. These books are being translated into other languages, including French German, Spanish, Dutch, Russian, Chinese and Arabic. The Anjuman has run several Muslim missions around the world including the first ever in Western Europe.

History:

- 1889: Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement.
- 1901: Movement given name Ahmadiyya after Holy Prophet Muhammad's other famous name Ahmad
- 1905: Hazrat Mirza appoints central body (Anjuman) to manage the Movement.
- 1908: Death of Hazrat Mirza. Succeeded by Maulana Nur-ud-Din as Head.
- 1914: Death of Maulana Nur-ud-Din. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam founded Lahore as Continuation of the original Anjuman. Maulana Muhammad Ali elected as Head.
- 1951: Death of Maulana Muhammad Ali after fifty years of glorious service to the cause of Islam. Maulana Sadr-ud-Din (9.1981 becomes Head.
- 1981-1996: Dr Saeed Ahmad Khan, an eminent Medical Doctor and religious scholar, led the Movement, at a time of intense persecution
- 1996 -2002: Prof. Dr Asghar Hameed, a distinguished Retired University Professor of Mathematics, and learned Islamic scholar, served as Head.
- 2002: Prof. Dr Abdul Karim Saeed Pasha elected Head.

CONTACT WITH GOD ELEVATES MAN

By Maulana Muhammad Ali

[This article is a transcript of a Jummah Khutba presented by Maulana Muhammad Ali, and was originally published in the January 24, 1950 issue of "The Light". The purpose of this khutba was to compare some basic principles of Islam with that of Communism and reveal how Islam, not Communism, only can lead man to perfection.]

Sura Fatiha, the opening chapter of the Holy Quran, and for that matter the whole of the Islamic prayer from beginning to end, is a solemn supplication before the Most High God. It begins with the memorable words: "All praise unto the Most High God who is the nourisher, the sustainer of all creatures. The significance of this statement is not restricted to the sense that He provides for our physical needs or grows sustenance for us from the earth, nor does it merely mean that He has revealed the Holy Quran for the good and guidance of mankind. But it also indicates that man cannot attain to perfection without coming into touch and tune with the Most High God. There is indeed a great difference between the ways and means taught by Islam and the Holy Prophet for attaining this goal of perfection, and those adopted by other religions. God, according to religion, is the focal point of man's perfection; without Him, man's perfection is simply impossible. But worldlyminded people, and in some cases the followers of some religions also, think wrongly that the existence of God is not necessary for man's attaining to this goal of perfection.

There is, as a matter-of-fact, a vast difference between Communism and Islam in devising means for carrying man to the cherished goal of perfection. Islam teaches that this perfection can be achieved only by means of God, who is the nourisher and sustainer unto perfection, whereas others think that the different things which God has created for the physical sustenance of man are the real means for attaining perfection. The Creator of the universe, according to the Holy Quran, and not the things created, can only take man along the path to the acme of perfection. This is the one great difference between true faith and irreligion. Islam, for this reason, has laid the greatest stress upon prayer.

People have formed a wrong conception of prayer. They say that God should be implored to give you good food and other physical comforts. And Muslims too have unfortunately fallen into this error. This is the main reason that people denying the efficacy of prayer altogether, have cropped up. They argue that the fact that God has already created all things necessary for our sustenance and physical comforts, precludes the necessity of prayer

altogether. Prayer, of a truth, being the only means which establishes a holy and happy communion between God and man, elevates the latter to the highest point of perfection. Communism reared its head 60 years ago and kicked up a rude row in the world. But how many souls has it reformed and reclaimed to the true path of spiritual edification and perfection is distinctly before our eyes.

Things of physical pleasure, such as food, can be had all over the world in the lands of Capitalism as well as countries of Communism. But, so far as human reformation is concerned, the elevation of human character, Communism has dragged humanity downwards. Consider, on the one hand, the mighty movement which appeared in the world under the name of Islam. To establish communion with the Most High God, was its basic principle. Islam, the fact cannot be denied, has not only opened a vast vista for human progress, but has also elevated man to the highest pinnacle of spiritual glory and greatness. The Prophet, as a matter-of-fact, created such a mighty revolution in the field of human elevation that if it were permissible to believe in another being as God, besides the one true God, the Holy Prophet Muhammad would certainly have been regarded as such.

People think that prayer and piety cannot go hand in hand with worldly advancement and progress. But the Prophet carried both to perfection, and there was no phase of human life in which he lifted not man to the highest point of perfection. There is no denying the fact that life today seems to be easy and comfortable but it has an affliction attending upon it. The supreme stage, on the other hand, where the Holy Prophet led his people to sets as naught and solves all human difficulties with wonderful perfection and felicity. It is a pity that the Muslims have not been able to remove the cover which the opponents of Islam have cast maliciously on the fair and fascinating face of the Prophet. The day this cover is torn asunder, the world will be dazzled and dazed to see that the Prophet of Islam stood matchless and without an equal in excellence and sublimity.

We have thus a tremendous task to perform. We have, no doubt, rendered the Holy Quran into some languages of the world that the people may be able to read and understand the Divine word for themselves. But it will be a case of all labor lost if these renderings are not distributed largely among the nations. Human effort is surely meager and weak to accomplish this great

task of bringing the world submissively round the Holy Quran. Let us, therefore, gather together and prostrate in humble submission before the Most High God beseeching His help. But no amount of prayer will be of any avail until your minds believe strongly that Islam shall predominate and prevail in the world. To this effect there are Divine promises, but these promises have been held in abeyance on account of our indifference and apathy. We should implore the Almighty God most solemnly to remove our weakness and cause the Divine word with regard to the dominance of Islam to be fulfilled. I admonish particularly the members of our Jamaat who have, on the holy hand of the Imam of this age, taken the solemn pledge of keeping Islam above all worldly

considerations. Even they are not acting in the way of this Divine promise. God's word must come to pass. He can wring water from flint. Did not the steel hearts of those stones who lived in the time of the Holy Prophet burst open and waters of godliness and piety issue forth from them? Even now it shall come to pass and it will be our good luck or misfortune, accordingly to whether we render our mite of service to its fulfillment or remain indifferent to it. Human reformation, I repeat emphatically once again, cannot be accomplished until we bow our head before the great God begging for His help and guidance. He will certainly send His aid and triumph which have been held up, when we adjust our actions to deserve them.

AN "EVER RECURRING HAPPINESS": EID-UL-FITR KHUTBA

By Dr. Noman Malik

[This article comprises the Eid-ul-Fitr khutba delivered in Columbus, Ohio, U.S.A. by Dr. Noman Malik. Dr. Malik explains the significance of religious festivals in Islam by examining the true meaning of 'Id' or an 'ever recurring happiness.' He further distinguishes the temporary nature of material benefits with the permanency of spiritual progress, thereby concluding that it is the spiritual food and not the material food that provides man with true happiness].

O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil (2:183).

Today is the festival of Id ul fitr which marks the end of Ramadan, the month of fasting.

Significance of Religious Festivals in Islam

The two great festivals in Islam are known as Id ul fitr and Id ul Adhza. In other religions, festivals are commemorative, marking important events such as the birth or death of some divine personage or a significant historical occurrence. Examples of such are Christmas, celebrating the birth of Jesus; or the Jewish festivals Passover, Yom Kippur and Hanukah marking historical events.

Although, there is no dearth of religious personalities or events in Islam, no such festivals are celebrated by Muslims. Perhaps no religious personage is more revered and loved by his followers than the Holy Prophet Muhammad by Muslims, but neither the birth nor the death of the Holy Prophet is celebrated in Islam. Furthermore, miraculous instances in the early history of Islam, when God's help against tremendous odds is clearly demonstrated, like victory in the battle of Badr, the Hijrah (migration of the Holy Prophet from Mecca to Madina), the conquest of Mecca etc., are not celebrated

by Muslims with festivals. Instead Islam attaches a totally new significance to religious festivals. Rather than celebrating personages or events, it celebrates the completion of a duty which is necessary for spiritual development. Thus the completion of fasting in the month of Ramadan becomes a cause for celebration. As Id literally means ever-recurring happiness, one may ask how completing one month of fasting becomes a source of ever-recurring happiness. The benefits of such a source should be ever-lasting; they should not deteriorate, decay or cease. Thus, although worldly life may be a source of happiness and gain, these benefits are transitory. Ultimately, every source of worldly happiness, be it good health, wealth or political power, must come to an end. At times misfortunes occur during a person's lifetime and these worldly sources of happiness are lost sooner, and at times they eventually end with death.

In contrast to material happiness, however, spiritual happiness lasts for ever and is not destroyed by death. The most valuable and precious gift that Almighty Allah has granted human beings is not any material benefit; rather, it is the immortal divine soul. God breathed His own spirit or ruh into every human being This soul survives death, and depending upon the life it has led in this world may become fit for an eternal life of happiness with God. This eternal life is the ultimate true success, and is the ever recurring happiness which God Almighty, in His infinite love and mercy has bestowed on man as stated in the following Quranic verses: And the soul and its perfection! - So He reveals to it its way of evil and its way of good; He is indeed successful who causes it to grow, And he indeed fails who buries it (91:7-10). O soul that art at rest, Return to thy Lord, well-pleased, well-pleasing, So enter among My servants, And enter My Garden (89:27-30)! And as for those who are made happy, they will be in the Garden abiding therein so long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as

thy Lord please — a gift never to be cut off (11:108). In order to reach the spiritual state mentioned in the verses above, one must develop one's soul. All that is necessary for man's spiritual development and journey to God are found in the verses of the Holy Quran relating to Ramadan, the month of fasting. These elements are: 1) belief in a living God, 2) guidance provided by the Holy Quran, and 3) practical demonstration of that guidance in one's life and prayer.

Belief in a Living God

The one absolutely essential and fundamental requirement for spiritual development is belief in the reality of God. Unless God becomes a living reality in a person's life, spiritual progress is impossible. The verses relating to fasting themselves explain how fasting brings about this belief in a living God. The first verse states: O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil (tattaqun) (2:183). To understand this verse completely, one must understand the full meaning of the word *muttaqin* or those who guard against evil or are careful of their duty. An excellent explanation of this word is given in the incomparable footnotes of the English Translation of the Holy Quran by Maulana Muhammad Ali as follows:

...translators generally render [the word 'muttaqin'] into God-fearing or pious. The root is *waqa*, and conveys the sense of saving, guarding, or preserving (LL). According to R, *wiqaayahh* signifies the guarding of a thing from that which harms or injures it. The verb, of which *muttaqui* is the nominative form, is *ittaqa*, which means, he preserved or guarded himself exceedingly. "In the conventional language of the law", according to LL, "he preserved or guarded himself exceedingly from sin or what would harm him in the world to come." Hence the word *muttaqi* may properly be translated only as one who guards himself against evil, or one who is careful of, or has regard for, or keeps his duty. The Quran is here described as affording guidance to those who keep their duty, because the sense of keeping his duty is innate in man, and everyone who has regard for duty is true to nature and true to himself.

No guidance would benefit a man who has no regard for his duty. Adopting the alternative meaning, those who guard against evil, the significance is that guarding against evil or being saved from sin is the first stage in man's spiritual advancement, and the Quran lays down the principles by following which the higher stages of that advancement are attained (footnote to 2:2). Furthermore, a person will only be a *muttaqui* (one who is careful of his duty to God and one who guards against evil) if he has a firm belief in God. This is the first requirement in the road to spiritual success as stated in the verse:

This Book (i.e. the Holy Quran), there is no doubt in it, is a guide to those who keep their duty, Who believe in the Unseen and keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them, and of the hereafter they are sure (2:2,3). Belief in the Unseen here stands for belief in God, and it is the first requirement of being a *muttaqui*. This principle is emphasized every week in the Jummah Khutbah in the words, "...the remembrance of Allah is the greatest (force for refraining from evil and the greatest impetus for doing good)." Thus, the importance of belief in a living God is made clear. In Islam, fasting is the practical means to bring the abstract faith in God to the forefront as a tangible reality.

In contrast with most religions where fasting is usually practiced as an act of expiation to appease an angry deity or for self mortification, Islam utilizes the abstinence from food, drink and sexual relations from dawn to dusk in an ingenious way to make God a reality. The physical desires of hunger, thirst and sex are universal and are common to all human beings. By virtue of this fact, all human beings, regardless of the degree of their spiritual inclination, become participants in this spiritual exercise when they fast. During the fast, there is no worldly law which can prevent a person from satisfying these physical needs. It would be very easy for a person to eat and drink in secret, but it is the thought that God exists and is watching that prevents a person from satisfying these very legitimate desires. In this way God becomes a living reality. Furthermore, as hunger and thirst, once felt, only increase with the passage of time, the struggle to resist satisfying them for the sake of God strengthens the belief in God proportionately. In addition, as fasting is incumbent on every eligible adult Muslim, a large part of the population fasts, and this community effort by itself, is a strong factor in strengthening the individual's feeling that God exists as everyone appears to obey His command to refrain from food and drink. Furthermore this spiritual exercise lasts not for just a few days, but rather for a whole month.

Consequently, God's presence and existence become a continuous reality for ordinary people, who otherwise tend to forget God easily, as they become absorbed in their daily worldly affairs. Fasting therefore enables ordinary people to experience the continuous presence of God as is felt by His chosen ones all the time. This sense of awareness of God enables a man to subdue and control his physical desires so that he exercises them at the appropriate times and occasions as taught by God in His holy scriptures. In this way, physical desires serve a beneficial purpose and become a means of furthering spiritual progress, rather than of running riot, and destroying the soul of a person. Also, by causing pangs of hunger and thirst, fasting increases empathy for the poor and serves as an impetus to give charity, an essential practical act necessary for man's spiritual

progress as stated in the following verse: You cannot attain to righteousness unless you spend out of what you love. And what you spend, Allah surely knows it (3:92).

Revelation of the Holy Quran

With the belief in the existence and reality of God as the basis for all actions, a person needs guidance on how to conduct himself so that he may draw closer to God. Thus, in the second verse relating to fasting the Holy Quran states: The month of Ramadan is that in which the Qur'an was revealed, a guidance to men and clear proofs of the guidance and the Criterion (2:185). A spiritual journey is analogous to physical journey. To successfully complete a physical journey, a person needs to know what his destination is, and requires a map or directions to get to it. Likewise for successful spiritual development, a man needs to know who God is, what His attributes are, what his relationship to man is and what man must do in order to reach him. The answers to these questions are provided in the revelations that God Almighty out of his mercy or Rahma (defined as his attribute of having so much love for his creatures that He must do good to them) has been sending down through his messengers from the beginning of man's creation.

This message, in its final, incorruptible and complete form applicable to all situations and ages, is the Holy Quran. Not only did the final and perfect revelation for mankind commence in the blessed month of Ramadan, but, with the revelation of the Quran, also commenced the prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The Holy Prophet, by his moral and spiritual excellence, reached the closest position to God that is possible for a human being to attain. For this reason he is called the perfect model in the Holy Quran as his life practically demonstrates the guidance offered in the Holy Quran: Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allāh and the Latter day, and remembers Allah much (33:21). When asked about the Holy Prophet's morals, Hazrat Ayesha very aptly characterizes this in her succinct reply, "his morals are the Quran". Therefore by modeling ones character on that of the Holy Prophet's, a person can also rise to great spiritual heights as promised in the Holy Quran: Say: If you love Allah, follow me: Allah will love you, and grant you protection from your sins. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful (3:31).

Prayer

And when My servants ask thee concerning Me, surely I am nigh. 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). Whereas fasting instills the conviction of a living God by physical means, salat, or the Islamic prayer, does so on a higher conscious level. Five times a day, a person must leave his comfortable bed or worldly affairs, often at a time when,

in the latter case, it may mean losing money to stand in prayer before God. Thus this very act of attending prayers makes God a living reality. Although fasting is a discipline that instills the sense of a living God, it cannot be practiced year round.

On the other hand, prayer can be maintained at all times. Hence, great stress is laid on establishing prayer, especially the tahajjud prayer so that prayer becomes a habit which can be practiced on a regular basis: Recite that which has been revealed to thee of the Book and keep up prayer. Surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil; and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest (force). And Allah knows what you do (29:45). The Islamic prayer, salat, is unique in instilling the conviction of God on a large scale. Standing like brothers or sisters, shoulder to shoulder in straight lines like a spiritual army, in an atmosphere of perfect equality, facing in the same direction towards the Kaaba (the house of God symbolizing the unity of the spiritual goal) Muslims repeat the sura fatiha, the center piece of the salat. These seven short verses capsule all the spiritually purifying teachings of the Holy Quran. The prayer is an earnest desire to be guided on the right path, the path of the righteous, the most perfect example of whom is the holy prophet Muhammad. This path requires imbibing those divine attributes of God stated in the first three verses. Just as God is the Rabb, the Nourisher unto perfection, who out of his infinite mercy (Rahma) provides for mankind's physical and spiritual development, so should humans help their fellow human beings develop in all fields by doing good to them out of love for them; just as God is forgiving in dealing with humans and punishes them only to effect reform, so should a person be just and forgiving in his/her dealing with human beings. This is the right way, the example set by those upon whom God has bestowed favors, the path which leads to God. The heightened consciousness of the Divine during Ramadan affords an ideal opportunity for establishing regularity in prayer which keeps a person on this path of spiritual progress.

Spiritual Transformation

The Holy Quran fittingly ends the references to fasting with the following verse: And swallow not up your property among yourselves by false means, nor seek to gain access thereby to the judges, so that you may swallow up a part of the property of men wrongfully while you know (2:188). Spiritual endeavors are useless if they are not backed with good deeds, for good deeds are the trees of paradise which bear fruit: Seest thou not 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? And Allah sets forth parables for men that they may be mindful (14:24-25). Without good deeds, religion deteriorates into hypocrisy. The Holy Quran emphasizes

the point that if one abstains from lawful activity such as eating and drinking during a fast because one considers it a command from a living God, how much more important it is to refrain from illegally usurping the property and rights of one's fellow man? This is the keeping one's duty to God (taqwa) and forms the basis for all good deeds. Thus lying, cheating, stealing, abusing, intentionally losing one's temper or any other spiritual misdeeds which harms another or violates another's rights breaks the fast.

Ever Recurring Happiness

Thus, Id ul fitr celebrates the development of the conviction of a living God through fasting and prayer, the beginning of the final revelation. (The Holy Quran) and the advent of the perfect spiritual model, which the Rahman, the infinitely merciful God, has sent for the spiritual perfection of man. This is what we celebrate and what we give thanks for as stated in the following verse of the Holy Quran:

...Allah desires ease for you, and He desires not hardship for you, and (He desires) that you should complete the number and that you should exalt the greatness of Allah for having guided you and that you may give thanks (2:185). This is food from heaven which Almighty God promised in response to Jesus' prayer as related in the Holy Quran in the following verses: When the disciples said: O Jesus, son of Mary, is thy Lord able to send down food to us from heaven? He said: Keep your duty to Allah if you are believers. They said: We desire to eat of it, and that our hearts should be at rest, and that we may know that thou hast indeed spoken truth to us, and that

we may be witnesses thereof. Jesus, son of Mary, said: O Allah, our Lord, send down to us food from heaven which should be to us an ever-recurring happiness (Id) to the first of us and the last of us, and a sign from Thee, and give us sustenance and Thou art the Best of the sustainers (5:112-114). The food promised in these verses is spiritual food, that is, the advent of Islam and the revelation of the Holy Quran and the appearance of Holy Prophet Muhammad. In these verses besides the advent of Islam, there is also a prophecy about how Islam will spread among the Christians which is relevant for our times and our movement. During the initial spread of Islam, it was the great Christian communities of the Middle East who accepted the message of Islam. The "first of us" would refer to these communities in the above verse. The "last of us" refers to the Christians of the latter days, that is, of the present time, the time of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. It would be through the Ahmadiyya Movement founded by him that the true peaceful and spiritually uplifting teachings of Islam, specifically through the translation and commentary of the Holy Quran by Maulana Muhammad Ali, that Islam would once again be presented to the Christian West and win them over. It is a great honor and blessing that God Almighty has conferred on us that as Lahori Ahmadis we have been given this tremendous opportunity to participate in this spiritual jihad. May Almighty Allah have Mercy on us and strengthen us so that we may remain faithful to the conditions of our Bait to "hold the cause of Religion above worldly attractions" and deliver this spiritual food which is a cause for an ever recurring happiness to all mankind. Ameen!

THE FIVE DAILY PRAYERS: A REPRESENTATION OF THE FIVE-FOLD CONDITION OF MAN IN ADVERSITY

By Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad

[This article was first published in the May 1903 edition of the "Review of Religions". Hazrat Mirza explains that the appointed times for the five daily prayers symbolically represent the five different emotional states of man in adversity. Prayer, being a source of spiritual benefit to man, is thus an opportunity throughout the day to seek protection from hardship and misfortune.]

What are the five daily prayers? They are photographs of your changing conditions. The life of man is subject to five different changes which he undergoes in the time of adversity. These five changes are necessary to human nature. First of all, you are informed of the misfortune that is going to befall you, as for instance when a warrant is issued from a court of justice for your arrest. For the first time then your comfort and happiness is suddenly interrupted and a cloud of melancholy is cast over your sunshine of glory.

This stage corresponds to the time for the first prayer immediately after noon. As the sun begins to decline from the zenith after noon, so too does a man who is at the height of his prosperity and success witness the first stage of his declination when he comes to know of an impending misfortune. This stage of the human condition finds its representation in the prayer which is said at the first decline of the sun, i.e. the zuhr prayer. The sun declines farther to the west and the troubles increase. In the illustration already stated, the person upon whom the warrant is executed is brought before the magistrate. Difficulties then encompass him all around, and the light of comfort is on the verge of extinction. Corresponding to this state of man is the time of the day when the sun has declined far to the west and his light is turned pale so that the eye can rest upon him.

The zenith of glory is left far behind and the setting of the sun after a short time is apparent. The later after-noon prayer, ie. the asr prayer, answers to this spiritual state. A third change then comes over the man. There is no hope left of being delivered from the trouble. To continue the illustration already suggested, evidence being taken against the accused person shows his guilt, a charge is framed by the Magistrate. He is then frightened out of his senses and deems himself already a prisoner. The son of glory is then set. This state corresponds to the time when the sun is actually set and the light of the day vanishes away. The evening prayer said after sunset presents this condition. The culminating point of adversity is reached when darkness encompasses a man all around and its force is fully realized. The verdict goes against the person charged and he is thrown into a dungeon. Thus a night comes over the day of prosperity even as it actually comes after sunset when the last rays of light having disappeared, complete darkness pervades on the face of the earth. The prayer fixed for this time is the night

prayer which is thus the fourth representative of a man's condition in adversity. The night passes away and the rays of light once more beam upon the person who has been surrounded with difficulties. The mercy of God takes the prisoner by the hand and sets him free. The morning comes after the long hours of night and before its light dispels the clouds of darkness. This spiritual state of man is represented by the fifth or morning prayer. It will be seen from this that the five daily prayers represent five changes in the fortune of a man and the time of the day at which Almighty God has appointed a particular prayer to be said represents a particular phase of fortune. The prayers are, therefore, for your own benefit. If you wish that the adversities which are in store for you should not befall you, say your prayers at the appointed time for they are images of the external and internal changes in your conditions. Prayer is a remedy for future adversities. You do not know what tomorrow has in store for you; therefore, pray to God before the new sun rises that the new day may bring you happiness and blessings.

ID UL FITR KHUTBA 2006

By Ebrahim Mohamed

[This article is a transcript of the Id ul Fitr Khutba (sermon) delivered in South Africa in 2006. Ebrahim Mohamed is the President of the South African branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. The South Africa Jammah holds a key position in the history books of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. Faced with prejudice and bigotry, it was subjected to various forms of discrimination perpetuated by orthodox Muslim groups in the country. A civil court case resulted and, after an extensive presentation of testimony and review of evidence, it was held by the court that members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement are "Muslims" and, therefore, cannot be denied their religious rights as such. Mr. Mohamed was a key figure in the Lahore Ahmadiyya victory. Today he continues working steadfastly in preaching the true message of Islam to the world and does so, as is ever evident from this article, with a deep reverence for logic, reason and rationality.]

He it is Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the Religion of Truth that He may make it prevail over all religions (Ch 9: 33). Praise be to Allah Who us brought us together so that we may share in the joyous celebration of Id and afford us the opportunity to ponder and reflect on His majestic teachings. Praise be to Allah Who has made us endure the trials of the Ramadan as well as make us taste the blessings and joy of the Holy Month. Every Ramadan should bring a change in us for the better even if it means discarding just one bad habit

going forward. Otherwise the fast was a waste. During the days of Ramadan, plagued by the pangs of hunger and thirst, I realized that I will never be able to look at a poor man in the same way ever again. I told myself that I need to find a way of being less wasteful and find a credible institution that feeds the poor that I can support. There are many other lessons that Ramadan taught me but I cannot share them all with you now as I do not have the time, but this is one I will concentrate on for the rest of the year. I challenge each one of you, if you have not done so already, to do the same. For each one of you I know there must have been something that was of exceptional significance that the Ramadan inculcated in you that you would like to take forward with you after Ramadan. Perhaps you are one who loses your temper very easily and the Ramadan helped you to keep your temper under control? Or perhaps you are often neglectful of your prayers and the Ramadan helped you to be more regular in that regard? Only you know what is the best lesson the Ramadan had for you and which you would want to work on and uphold relentlessly for the rest of the year. But the question I have for all of us that have benefited from the Holy month of Ramadan is, what can we do collectively that would benefit humanity. Everything we have done so far is for ourselves. What is it that we can do in the way of Allah? And the answer that I come up with every time is that we should engage in constructive propagation of the Holy Quran, for the month of Shawwal is the month in which the propagation of the Holy Quran started. We should become ambassadors

of the Holy Quran by familiarizing, nay at best, strive to gain a good understanding of its sublime teachings and striving to model our own lives on it. But before I can do so, I need to know if the Holy Book can provide me with answers to the many questions that I often struggle with. I cannot narrate all the questions here for lack of time but I will share some of them with you, as I am certain you grapple with the same questions. I also need to know whether the Quran provides the best answers or whether there are better answers contained in other scriptures before I can truly become an ambassador of the Quran.

I have therefore summarized the questions I have and reduced it into two main ones: Does the Quran provide me with a perfect concept of the existence and nature of GOD, which no other scripture can provide, which readily appeals to and satisfies my rational mind? Does the Quran clearly explain who I am and what role I play in the grand plan of the Divine scheme of things? The answer is an emphatic yes and I challenge any skeptic to prove me wrong. None of the previous scriptures (Torah, Injeel, Vedas, Bagha Vagita, etc.) are in its pure form any more and therefore its depiction of the Divine Being are grossly imperfect and cannot be relied upon by any serious seeker after the truth. For example, the Christians do not know if God is one or three or four or whether God has a Son and whether the son is really a son or a god himself. Even the Pope, who is the Head of the largest Christian group, admits that the Trinity or the Triune concept of God is confusing and cannot be adequately explained. The nature of the Christian God is one that is extremely cruel and unjust. The God of Christianity is said to have masterminded the cruel and bloody execution of his only 'so called' son for no offence committed by him but to redeem other undeserving sinful parties. How can anyone trust a God like this when it comes to executing justice? Even humans of the worst kind will not resort to such a despicable act out of their own free will.

The way the Divine Being is depicted in the Quran, however, appeals to the reasoning faculties of the human mind. As we look around us everywhere and we ponder on His creation, we see everything is on an evolutionary path of progress, from the smallest vegetable seeds to vast luxuriant plantations; from the smallest atoms to the gigantic planets and galaxies in the universe; from inconceivable sperm cells to the highest and best of his creation, the human species, known as Adam or Mankind. The list goes on and on, ad infinitum. So the Divine Being or Allah as we name Him in Islam is aptly called "Rabb" in the Quran, an Arabic word which

no other language has an equivalent for. The best the English can do to give some meaning to the word Rabb is: That Being Who brings everything into existence from nothing, nourishes and sustains it through several evolutionary stages; each stage being higher than the other until such things reach its perfection. But this is not all. The Quran describes the nature of the Divine Being in such a way as not to be found in any other ancient scripture or modern writings. The Holy Prophet's first mission was to establish a grounding faith in Allah in men. He did not start by applying himself to removing degrading usages or evil customs or superstitions. Almost the whole of his Meccan revelations have but one theme: Allah is the Creator (Rabb) of all; He is the Nourisher of all; He reveals Himself to man; He makes His will known to man; He is the Holy One; He is nearer to man than his own soul; He is the Beneficent One; the Merciful One; the Loving One; the Affectionate One; the Forgiving One; the Giver of all gifts; the Ample Giving; He listens to every man's prayer; He loves good and hates evil; He loves those who serve the poor and those in distress; He loves the truthful; ones and so on.

As for the nature of Allah, we find that the Quran does not depict Him as a wrathful, punitive God ready to punish at all times. In fact we find that His Mercy extends to all mankind regardless of religion, race or creed. We find that His kindness and Mercy are boundless, beyond the conception of man. He is Merciful to the believers and to the unbelievers, the righteous and to the sinners alike. Says the Holy Quran: O My servants who have acted extravagantly against their own souls! Do not despair of the mercy of Allah, for Allah forgives sins altogether (39:53). Only from the Quran, we learn that Allah has been revealing Himself to all nations and Divine revelation is recognized as a universal fact. While revelation of the highest kind through the angel Gabriel was peculiar to the prophets, in its lower forms – through inspiration by the infusion of an idea into the mind, or in the form of a true dream or a vision – revelation was granted to other than prophets, to men as well as women:

And it is not for any mortal that Allah should speak to him except by infusing an idea into the mind or from behind a veil or by sending a messenger and revealing by His permission what He pleases (45:51). Even unbelieving people are also spoken of as seeing significant and truthful dreams. Thus in the history of the Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) we are told; And two youths entered the prison with him. One of them said, I saw myself pressing wine; and the other said, I saw myself carrying bread on my head of which birds ate (12:36). And the King said, I see seven fat kine which seven lean kine devoured,

and seven green ears and (seven) other dry; O Chiefs explain to me my dream (12:43). Both the youths and the King were unbelievers, and the three dreams were interpreted by Joseph as speaking of future events, being prophetic in their essence. So this is sufficient to prove to me that Allah's ni-mat, or goodness, to mankind is magnanimous, transcending all boundaries. So this is the God that is worthy of my worship and emulation and this description and more, which I do not have the time to cover here today, is contained in the Holy Quran alone and nowhere else. So the Holy Book more than answers my first question. On my second question as to whether the Quran clearly explains who I am and what role I play in the grand plan of the Divine scheme of things, I find adequate evidence that pleases my rational mind. The Holy Quran says: So set thy face upright for religion in the right state – the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah's creation; that is the right religion but most people do not know (30:30).

Surely we created man in the best make (95:4). Unlike Christianity, which teaches that every child is born in sin, the Holy Prophet, explaining the first verse above, said: "every child that is born conforms to the true religion (lit. human nature, i.e. Islam); it is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian" (Bukhari 23:80). Every child was thus recognized by birth to be a Muslim; the purity of human nature was not affected by his being born of non-Muslim parents. Everything created by Allah, we are further told, was made according to a measure so that it could not go beyond a certain limit. Glorify the name of thy Lord, the Most High, Who creates things, then makes them complete; And Who makes things according to a measure, then guides them to their goal (87: 1-3). So from an uncivilized state when mankind was still a slave to and worshipper of the forces of nature, the Holy Prophet through the teachings of the Holy Quran raised the early Muslims to the dignity of Master and Ruler over the forces of nature. By realizing their position and role in nature in the grand Divine scheme of things, the early Muslims took vigorous strides towards the expansion of knowledge and the advancement of sciences. Reading and writing was within a few years spread throughout the whole of Arabia and other countries which came under the influence of Islam, and the Muslim State so encouraged the pursuit of study and scientific research that centers of learning and universities sprang up throughout the empire of Islam. Unlike the dark ages that set in after Christianity, Islam left behind a trail of light and learning that gave rise to the renaissance (the revival of learning) in Europe.

But although the Holy Quran inspired the contributions of human thought on the physical sphere which led to man's conquest of the forces of nature, it, more importantly, brought about a complete change in the spiritual outlook of man. About Allah we are told; Who made good everything that He created, and He began the creation of man from dust; Then He made his progeny of an extract of water held in light estimation; Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit (32:7-9). This verse shows a mystic relation of the spirit of man with the Divine Spirit and refers to the higher life of man. The destiny of man we are taught by the Holy Quran through the Holy Prophet was therefore higher than the mere conquest of nature on the physical plain; it was to seek union with the Divine Spirit. That is the ultimate goal of all mankind. Says the Holy Quran: O Soul that are at rest! Return to thy Lord, well-pleased with Him, well-pleasing Him. So enter among My servants, And enter into My Garden (89: 27-30). The goal of life for every human being is therefore Liqa – Allah, or the meeting with Allah. So man's progress from one stage to another higher stage is endless. The aim and goal, according to the Holy Quran, is not this worldly life and the conquest of nature but it goes much further; progress to realms that the eyes have not seen and the ears have not heard of (according to the Holy Prophet). Our progress goes beyond this world into the next world. Says the Holy Quran of the believers in the next life: Allah has promised to the believing men and the believing women gardens in which rivers flow, to abide in them, and goodly dwellings in gardens of perpetual abode; and greatest of all is Allah's goodly pleasure – that is the grand achievement (9:72). So while spiritual realization is limited in this world, the next world opens unlimited fields of advancement to higher and higher stages. Paradise was thus according to the Prophet, the starting point for an advancement to higher and higher spiritual stages; hence, the high places to which the faithful shall be raised know no end, as there are still higher places above them and the ardent desire for more and more light in that life continues. The Holy Quran, teaches that even those who wasted their opportunity in this life by engrossing themselves in lower desires will ultimately be saved, hell being only a remedial stage in the higher life of man.

Hell is called in the Quran as ma'ula, or "friend of the sinners" in one place (57:15), and Umm, or Mother in another (101:9) All men, both believers and unbelievers, were created for mercy, and the purpose of Allah i.e. the meeting with Him or reaching the highest stage of our spiritual evolution must ultimately be fulfilled. The sinners we are told will have a hard life in Hell for a while

because they avoided the "hard striving" here which was needed to bring them closer to their Lord. But this 'hard life' will not last forever, as is the teachings of Christianity, for we are assured on the authority of the Holy Prophet: Surely a day will come over hell when there shall not be a single human being in it (Fath al Bayan fi Maqasid al – Quran). Surely a day will come over hell when it will be like a field of corn that has dried up after flourishing for a while (Kanz al Ummal). In another Hadith, the inmates of hell are expressly stated as being placed on the road to a higher life: Then Allah will say, Bring out (of the fire) every one in whose heart there is faith or goodness to the extent of a mustard seed, so they will be taken out having become quite black; then they will be thrown into

the river of life and they will grow as grows a seed by the side of the river (Bu: 2: 15). This report is conclusive on the remedial nature of Hell and establishes beyond doubt that all men will ultimately be set free on the way to a higher life. So with this knowledge from the Holy Quran corroborated by the Holy Prophet in places about who I am and what is my role in the grand Divine scheme of things, I am highly satisfied that my second question has been adequately answered and I am ready to serve as an ambassador of the Holy Quran and engage in the propagation of its sublime message to those who are sincere seekers after the truth. So I pass this message on to you, in the hope that I have adequately motivated and inspired you to do likewise.

PURPOSE OF FASTING IN ISLAM

By Nasir Ahmad

[This article is an abridged version of a sermon delivered at the Berlin Mosque in November 2005. Mr. Ahmad very poignantly discusses the institution of fasting in Islam by examining the source of this practice and the objective of the exercise. He also relates the true significance of celebrations in Islam, in general. This article is an excellent concise resource for understanding the import of the holy month of Ramadan and the festival of Eid.]

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 month of Ramadan is that in which the Qur'an was revealed, a guidance to men and clear proofs of the guidance and the Criterion. And when My servants ask thee concerning Me, surely I am nigh. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me, so they should hear My call and believe in Me and that they may walk in the right way (2:183, 185,186). A well-known hadith of the Holy Prophet (sas) is often repeated in the month of Ramadan which mentions that the first ten days are a source of Allah's mercy, the second ten days a source of forgiveness, and the last ten days grant one freedom from sin. A believer can enjoy Allah's mercy, blessings and freedom from sin only when he makes special effort to derive these blessings by keeping fast, offering special prayers besides the five daily prayers, recites daily the Divine guidance revealed in the form of the Holy Quran, and acts in a more charitable way in his behaviour, dealings and gestures. Brothers and sisters, Allah has given us a golden formula in the Holy Qur'an for making progress in our spirituality and nobility. It is mentioned in the words: Surely good deeds take away evil deeds (11:114). Islam does not command us to believe in an atonement, but exhorts us to make efforts in doing good deeds so that in this way

we are not only saved from committing evil deeds, but to make efforts to perform good deeds thus bringing a wholesome change in our attitude, actions and relations with our fellow beings.

Brothers and sisters, in Islam, fasting, as an institution, is a spiritual, moral and physical discipline of the highest order. This annual spiritual exercise on a regular basis purifies one's inner self and gives right direction to one's thoughts and actions throughout one's life. Allah has also taught us a prayer to this effect in the opening chapter of the Qur'an for seeking such guidance in the words: "Ihdi-nas siraatal mustaqeem," that is, "guide us on the right path". The true objective of fasting has been made plain in the verses which I recited in the beginning, "L'-al-lakum tattaqun," that is, "that you may guard against evil." This word, tattaqun, is derived from ittiqua. 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 Qur'an in the sense of fulfilment of duties, as stated in chapter 4, verse 1:

And keep your duty to Allah, by Whom you demand one of another your rights and to the ties of relationship. All the spiritual exercises and commandments enjoined in the Holy Qur'an 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. Chapter 107 of the Holy Qur'an beautifully summarises this primary objective to be achieved through righteousness and condemns those who observe the ritual and do not care to follow the spirit. It says: So woe to the praying ones, who are unmindful of their prayer! Who do good to be seen and refrain from acts of kindness (107:4-7).

Attaining righteousness through fasting and other modes of worship has been the prime objective of all religions. We find Prophet Jesus (as) exhorting his disciples in the same strain: Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled (Matthew 11:7). For I say unto you, that except your righteousness, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:20). Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: ..that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly... (Matthew 6:16-18).

Thus, this chapter not only mentions some primary acts of charity meant for the welfare of the deprived sections of the society but it also enjoins taking special care of 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. Islam 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. That is why a person who finds it extremely hard to keep the fast though exempted from keeping the fast yet has been enjoined to feed a needy person. As the Qur'an says: "And those who find it extremely hard may effect redemption by feeding a poor man" (2:184). Thus a righteousness person should prove to be more humane, more responsible, more tolerant, more humble and more generous in his behaviour towards his dear and near ones in particular and the members of the society in general. The Holy Qur'an also exhorts a righteous person to prove himself to be more responsible regarding his social obligations in these words: Surely the noblest of you with Allah is the most dutiful of you (49:13).

Here I would like to quote a very meaningful 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, and about which he will be questioned in the life hereafter. 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).

There are, in Islam, two great festivals having a religious sanction. Both these festivals go under the name of 'Id, which means a recurring happiness. The first of these is called 'Id al-Fitr, and it takes place at the end of the month of Fasting. The other is called 'Id al-Adzha, and this is celebrated at the end of a ten-day period of worship in intense humility to the One and Only Creator of the Universe, the Almighty Allah. Both these festivals are connected with the performance of some duty. In the first case, the duty of fasting, and in the second, the duty is intended to show that true happiness lies in exercising patience and making sacrifice in discharging one's responsibilities. And Allah guarantees in the Holy Qur'an that such people shall be granted honour and prosperity in the land. It says: And as for that which does good to men, it tarries in the earth (13:17). While celebrating the two great 'Id festivals, a Muslim not only remembers God, by attending a Divine service, but he is also enjoined to remember his poorer brethren. The institution of charitable contributions is associated with both 'Ids. On the occasion of the 'Id al-Fitr, every Muslim is required to give sadaqa al-Fitr, a compulsory charity which amounts to three or four kilos of wheat, barley, rice or any other staple food of the country, or its equivalent in money, per person in the family, including the old as well as the youngest members, males as well as females (Bukhari, 24:70). The payment is to be made before the service is held. On the eve of 'Id al-Adzha to commemorate the great sacrifice offered by Prophet Abraham (as), an animal is sacrificed, and one third of the meat should be given away to needy people.

This spiritual exercise of fasting should also ingrain in a Muslim's mind that he is to continue making efforts in his daily life to fight against his aggressive physical urges in order to achieve noble ideals in life. This continuous effort, in the terminology of the Holy Qur'an, is called a jihad, and in the words of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas), it a greater jihad than going to the battlefield. The blessed month has gone. Let us pray that this month-long spiritual exercise undertaken may continue to embellish our lives during the rest of the year. Thus, a true Muslim should prove that he is a conscientious and peace-loving citizen and a compassionate friend. I conclude this talk 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."

REMEMBERING RAMADAN

By Dr. Noman Malik

[This article is the Khutba (sermon) that was presented on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr in Columbus, Ohio in November 2007. In this article, Dr. Malik explains the true significance of Eid. Defined as "a source of ever recurring happiness", Dr. Malik explains that Eid cannot be limited to the celebration of the accomplishment of the various physical exertions experienced during Ramadan. Rather, it is the effect that the experience of Ramadan has on the soul, the part of a human that continues forever despite the death of the physical body, that is the true "ever recurring happiness".]

Today we celebrate Eid. There is a feeling of accomplishment for having fulfilled a duty which was laid upon us by God. Unfortunately, many of us approach the end of Ramadan as if it was the conclusion of some physical marathon which we participated in and successfully completed. We gave up drinking, eating and sexual activity, the three most basic physical human needs, because God ordered us to do so, and now today we celebrate the end of that exercise. However, there is a much more vital and deeper significance to Eid than that.

Meaning of Eid

The word Eid means "a source of ever recurring happiness". If we consider Eid solely as a celebratory day commemorating the end of Ramadan, then the maximum number of Eids that a person can reasonably hope to celebrate in a lifetime would be between eighty and ninety. This hardly qualifies as ever recurring. So the mere physical celebration of Eid is certainly not a source of ever recurring happiness.

Principle underlying the ever recurring happiness of Eid

Physical life is not eternal; each and every one of us must undergo physical death. But we all possess that greatest gift, the immortal soul, God's own spirit which He breathed into every human being, and this soul survives death. As the soul is in fact the spirit of God that is breathed into us, it has the seeds of divine attributes which when developed along the right lines makes it enter into a heavenly state which is referred to as the Garden (or jannah). This heavenly life with God begins in this life and gets completely manifested in the next life. It is a gift which will be never cut off. And as for those who are made happy, they will be in the Garden abiding therein so long as the heavens and the earth endure,

except as thy Lord please — a gift never to be cut off (11:108). Thus any action which helps us achieve this goal by helping are spiritual progress is a source of ever recurring happiness. In the Holy Quran, God clearly lays down the rules by which this spiritual progress occurs and the process by which one enters this Garden or heavenly state: And those who believe and do good, We shall make them enter Gardens in which rivers flow, to abide therein for ever. It is Allah's promise, in truth. And who is more truthful in word than Allah? It will not be in accordance with your vain desires nor the vain desires of the People of the Book. Whoever does evil, will be requited for it and will not find for himself besides Allah a friend or a helper. And whoever does good deeds, whether male or female, and he (or she) is a believer these will enter the Garden, and they will not be dealt with a whit unjustly (4:122-124).

Mercy of God as the basis for Ramadan

Eid, then, is a celebration of acquiring good habits and behavior patterns which help in the above mentioned spiritual purification. It is due to His attribute of Mercy (Rahma) that God Almighty has prescribed Ramadan for us. Mercy, or Rahma in Arabic, means "love and tenderness requiring the exercise of beneficence." In other words, it means to have so much love for a thing that one must do good to it. This is one of basic attributes of God and constitutes the very essence of the Divine Being, as evidenced by the fact that it is the only attribute which God declares in the Holy Quran that he has made binding upon himself: "He has ordained mercy on Himself" (6:12, 54). One of the greatest forms of good that God can do to man is to guide him along the right path so that he attains the purpose or objective of life, which is union with God. This path comprises believing in God and of doing good to Humanity. The facilitation of this path is, in fact, the goal of Ramadan: O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may be aware of your duty(to Allah) / guard against evil (tattaqoon) (2:183).

Ramadan makes God a living reality

The greatest force for the doing of good and abstaining from evil is the remembrance of God. Remembrance of God makes Him a living reality. Once God becomes a living reality in a person's life, one is continuously aware of God's attributes and is strongly attracted to Him. This love of God in turn engenders a strong desire in the human heart to emulate the divine attributes in order to

get closer to God. Therefore, just as God does good to His creation out of love for it (His attribute of Rahma), so does a person, for whom God is a living reality, does good to his fellowmen out of love for them. This doing of good to humanity entails: a) refraining from behavior that causes injury to others, such as lying, cheating, stealing, killing, etc., and b) practicing virtues which benefit humanity, such as charity, kindness, truthfulness etc. The Holy Prophet Muhammad has aptly described this state in a hadith in which he states that "do good as if you see God, and if you cannot do that, then do good as if He sees you."

Ramadan, a total spiritual immersion therapy

In Ramadan all our faculties physical and spiritual are harnessed in the remembrance of God. When we feel the physical desires of hunger, thirst and sexual desire, we refrain from satisfying them in obedience to God's command. The subjugation of these base desires, therefore, becomes a source of making God a reality in our everyday life. Similarly, we avoid anger, rage, lies and other immoral behavior, as these acts will break our fast. Although all guidance is provided in the Holy Quran and the sunnah of the prophet, and we are made aware of this in our five daily prayers, many times we neglect our prayers or are so engrossed in our daily affairs that we forget God. In Ramadan, though, our animal instincts of hunger, thirst and sexual desire – which are always with us (one may forget to pray but never to eat) – are harnessed in such a way that we are constantly aware of God. When we feel hunger and thirst but do not satisfy them, we remember that it is only because God has so instructed us; God, accordingly, becomes a living reality throughout the day. At the same time, great stress is laid on prayer during Ramadan, especially the tahajjud prayers. The purpose is so that the habit of regular prayer is developed, and thus the attributes of God and our relationship with Him are constantly reinforced many times a day. During the month of Ramadan the Holy Prophet used to personally wake people to perform their tahajjud prayers. Importance of prayer as instilling the reality of God in the Human heart is stated in the Quran as follows: And when My servants ask thee concerning Me, surely I am nigh. 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). Recite that which has been revealed to thee of the Book and keep up prayer. Surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil; and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest (force). And Allah knows what you do (29:45). And the tahajjud prayer itself is spoken of with such magnanimity in this regard: O thou covering thyself up! Rise to pray by night except a little, Half of

it, or lessen it a little, Or add to it, and recite the Quran in a leisurely manner. Surely We shall charge thee with a weighty word. The rising by night is surely the firmest way to tread and most effective in speech. (73:1-6).

And: And during a part of the night, keep awake by it, beyond what is incumbent on thee; maybe thy Lord will raise thee to a position of great glory (17:79). Additionally, great stress is laid in studying the Holy Quran in Ramadan. The Holy Quran states: The month of Ramadan is that in which the Quran was revealed, a guidance to men and clear proofs of the guidance and the Criterion (2:185). This revelation, the Holy Quran, was the spiritual food which was promised to the Christians by God in response to Prophet Jesus' prayer, as the Holy Quran narrates: Jesus, son of Mary, said: O Allah, our Lord, send down to us food from heaven which should be to us an ever-recurring happiness (EID) to the first of us and the last of us, and a sign from Thee, and give us sustenance and Thou art the Best of the sustainers. Allah said: Surely I will send it down to you (5:114-115). In this present day and age when Christianity is in ascendance, this promise has a special relevance to Muslims and especially to us, members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat. It was the Christians of the Middle East who accepted the message of Islam wholeheartedly 1400 years ago, and inshallah, it will be the Christians of today in Europe and the Americas who will accept the message of Islam when the Maulana Muhammad Ali translation and commentary of the Holy Quran, inspired by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Mujaddid, Promised Messiah and Mahdi, is presented to them. The Holy Quran contains all that is needed for the spiritual success of mankind and answers all the questions man has of unseen matters, like: who is God, what is our relationship to Him, how we can attain nearness to him, etc. And together with the revelation of the Holy Quran, we were also given a role model to follow in the person of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

Charity in all its forms is also strongly encouraged in this month so that the development of the divine attributes within man can be applied in practice. It is also a fact that as we come to the end or the latter part of Ramadan, the body does get used to doing without food and drink, and the factor of hunger and thirst in making us aware of God lessens, but by that time one becomes so engrossed in prayer and study of the Quran that this spiritual exertion takes over and becomes more important in making God a spiritual reality. The Holy Prophet Muhammad has said that in Ramadan the devil is fettered in chains, and the doors of hell are closed, and the doors of heaven are opened. Truly in Ramadan when we control our physical

desires which are constantly being inflamed by the devil then we do chain the devil and make him work for us. Similarly when we refrain from evil deeds the doors of hell are closed for us and the more we become aware of all the attributes of God and put them into practice by doing good to humanity, the closer we get to God and enter his Garden. All this happens because of the remembrance of Allah which occurs in Ramadan. May Almighty Allah give us all the strength and guidance that

we can carry on with the spirit of Ramadan for the rest of the year so that it becomes a source of ever recurring happiness for us. May He grant us the resolve to be regular in our daily prayers and tahajudd prayers and study of the Holy Quran so we may be constantly be aware of His existence. And may He grant us protection from forgetting these lessons learnt in Ramadan, so that we foolishly loosen the devil's chains or open the doors of hell with our own hands. Ameen and Eid Mubarik!

FASTING — ITS IMPACT ON THE SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OF A MUSLIM

by Mr. Nasir Ahmad, Lahore, Former Editor, The Light

“The month of Ramadan is that in which the Quran was revealed, a guidance to men and clear proofs of the guidance and the Criterion.” (2:185)

“And when My servants ask you concerning Me, surely I am nigh. 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)

“And swallow not up your property among yourselves by false means, nor seek to gain access thereby to the judges, so that you may swallow up a part of the property of men wrongfully while you know.” (2:188)

Islam has appointed two festivals for Muslims, i.e., Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. As with other festivals, these are occasions for expressing joy, merriment and celebrations, but the purpose of these festivals for Muslims is not merely to indulge in joyous and merrymaking activities, rather, it is primarily to give thanks to Allah for the successful completion of a programme of spiritual training in obedience to the commandment of Allah. This month-long spiritual training is to inculcate in the character of a Muslim social nobility, concern for others' problems and willingness to sacrifice for their amelioration. This is the standard of nobility which Islam wishes its adherents to maintain in their thoughts and actions. Allah refers to it in the Holy Quran in the following words: “Certainly We created man in the best make.” (95:4)

Dr. Basharat Ahmad, a well-known commentator of the Holy Quran, describes beautifully the lowliness and height in the character of a man, in his beautiful commentary, *Anwar-ul-Quran*, in the following words:

“Good and evil are intertwined in the activities of human beings. On the one hand we see persons with fine sentiments of nobility and gentleness, while on the other hand we find persons who are selfish and ferocious like animals. If we see angelic persons observing benevolence and love, then we also see persons who are greedy and selfish like wolves and bloodthirsty and

ruthless like scorpions. ... It is the man who guards outside the houses so that the inmates may enjoy peace and security, and it is again the man who stealthily enters a house from the back and takes away valuables and causes insecurity and misery to the inmates.”

If we require years of education and hard work to reach a high position in worldly life, so, too, do we require much more education and hard work to discipline our inner self which is the centre of our thoughts and which ultimately motivates our actions.

The Holy Quran refers to this as follows: “O men, there has come to you indeed an admonition from your Lord and a healing for what is in the hearts, and a guidance and a mercy for the believers.” (10:57) Prayer, Zakat, Fasting and Pilgrimage to Makkah are various stages in the spiritual training programme of Islam. When a person passes through these stages, a particular attitude and behaviour evolve in his character as envisaged by the teachings of Islam and it brings him nearer to his Creator and consequently his inner qualities shine out for the benefit of his fellow human beings. For instance, during the blessed month of Ramadan a Muslim makes special effort to obey the commandments of Allah by reciting the Holy Quran, observing prayers with concentration and devotion, shuns evil thoughts and actions and tries to entertain noble ideals and resolutions. He also shows greater concern for the amelioration of the sufferings of other human beings and offers them help and sympathy by means of fitrana, charity and other modes of ease and comfort which he can afford. This is how a man's heart is cleansed of the dross of greed, selfishness, hate, jealousy and feelings of class distinction and instead love and compassion are generated in his relationship towards his fellow beings. For instance, it has been made obligatory for a person who is incapable of keeping fast to feed a needy person.

The obligation of feeding a needy person can be discharged by providing what the person needs and it does not necessarily mean giving of food only. Now if a

person is incapable of keeping the fast and for this reason Allah has exempted him, why it is that Allah still wants him to feed a needy person? It teaches that the showing of sympathy towards one's fellow beings is one of the primary objects of fasting and even if one is incapable of fasting, he is required to demonstrate sympathy and concern for his fellow human being.

Innumerable references can be quoted from the Holy Quran and examples shown from the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad which bear witness to the fact that human sympathy and well-being are the essence of the teachings of Islam. The following verse of the Holy Quran shows how liberal and broad-based should be the attitude and treatment of a believer in showing sympathy and kindness to others:

“And serve Allah and associate naught with Him, and be good to the parents and to the near of kin and the orphan and the needy and the neighbour of (your) kin and the alien neighbour, and the companion in a journey and the wayfarer and those whom your right hands possess. Surely Allah loves not such as are proud and boastful.” (4:36) In the very next verse a stern warning has also been given to those who are negligent in being kind and sympathetic towards others. The verse says: “Who are niggardly and bid people to be niggardly and hide that which Allah has given them out of His grace. And We have prepared for the disbelievers an abiding chastisement.” (4:37)

So, fasting is a training programme for promoting a spirit of restraint, selflessness and human sympathy — a programme during which a man not only experiences hunger and thirst but he also exercises control over his emotions and passions. It is written in Hadith that if someone talks to you harshly or quarrels with you during fasting, tell him politely that you are keeping fast. In other words, one is enjoined to keep one's passions and emotions in restraint and to show forbearance and humility on occasions when one is likely to lose one's temper. Time does not permit me to explain what sort of self-control, patience and kind treatment one is required to show as a result of fasting.

I would now like to read to you a short part of a long narration from a Hadith report of the Holy Prophet Muhammad which highlights the objectives and blessings of the month of Ramadan:

“O people, a month of grandeur and blessings is about to spread its wings over you. In this month there is a night which is better than a thousand months. It is a month of patience, and the reward of patience is Paradise. It is a month of sympathy and sharing of sorrows. The first ten days of this month bring blessings, the second ten days

bring Allah's forgiveness and the last ten days grant deliverance from the fire of Hell. Anyone who lightens the workload of his slave or servant in this month, Allah shall forgive his sins and shall save him from the fire of hell.”

The Founder of Islam (SAL), who has been called “A mercy unto the nations”, has implicitly enjoined us in this way to be kind during the month of fasting even when we are taking work from our servants by lessening their workload. In other words, by doing so one will be showing concern and sympathy for the hardship of others. Exploitation in any form for one's own benefit is against the spirit of Islam. The Holy Prophet's particular concern for servants, and for that matter, for subordinates, during the month of fasting, shows how important it is for a Muslim to practise social welfare and kindness towards the weaker sections of the society.

Now I would like to quote a well-known British writer, Thomas Carlyle, who, in his beautiful book, *Heroes and Hero-worship*, pays tribute to the teachings of Islam and in particular to the social edicts of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAL). While appreciating the spirit of compassion for one another which the Holy Prophet preached and practised, Thomas Carlyle, in his second lecture entitled “The Hero as Prophet”, quotes the following words of the Holy Prophet of Islam:

“‘Ye have compassion on one another’. This struck me much; Allah might have made you having no compassion on one another — how had it been then!”

At another place in the same lecture, the Christian author, while analysing the teachings of Islam, regards doing of noble and virtuous deeds as earning God's heaven, and in this connection he especially refers to the five daily prayers and abstinence from wine:

“His religion (i.e. the religion revealed to the Holy Prophet) is not an easy one: with rigorous fasts, lavations, strict complex formulas, prayers five times a day, and abstinence from wine, it did not ‘succeed by being an easy religion’. As if indeed any religion, or cause holding of religion, could succeed by that! It is a calumny on men to say that they are roused to heroic action by ease, hope of pleasure, recompense — sugarplums of any kind, in this world or the next! In the meanest mortal there lies something nobler. The poor swearing soldier, hired to be shot, has his honour of a soldier, different from drill regulations and the shilling a day. It is not to taste sweet things, but to do noble and true things, and vindicate himself under God's heaven as a God-made man, that the poorest son of Adam dimly longs. Show him the way of doing that, the dullest day-drudge kindles into a hero. They wrong man greatly who say he is seduced by ease. Difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom and death are the allurements that act on the

heart of man." (pp. 236, 237) The Christian scholar has regarded "doing of noble and true things as earning God's heaven", and undoubtedly the very object of enjoining fast is to provide training and discipline for leading such a pure and purposeful life to which the Christian author has referred. During this blessed month a believer is eager to comply with the commandments of Allah and to impress upon his mind Allah's sovereignty and grandeur so that his whole being is immersed in submission and subservience to his Creator. Let us examine the wording of the niyyah of keeping fast and see how the concept of the All-pervading Allah is being impregnated into the mind and soul of a Muslim:

"O Allah, I keep fast to seek Your pleasure, and I profess belief in You, and I trust in You and I break the fast with what You have provided."

How beautiful is the way in which a servant expresses his gratitude to his Master and how submissive is the style in which he shows his obedience to his Creator and how elegant is the manner in which close relationship between the servant and Master has been depicted! And see how Allah conveys acceptance of His servant's expression of thankfulness and obedience to his Lord through the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAL) which is mentioned in the Hadith in these words:

"Fasting is for Me and only I shall recompense it." And in the Holy Quran we find that Allah acknowledges a servant's supplications and submissions and graciously accepts them in these majestic words:

"And when My servants ask you concerning Me, surely I am nigh. 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)

Here Allah has laid down a condition for accepting the prayers of His servant and granting him His audience and that is, that he should have complete faith in Him and should obey all His commandments with complete sincerity and submission.

While giving details of the injunction of fasting, Allah especially mentions two other things: firstly, regard and respect to be shown to women and secondly, not to devour the wealth of others unlawfully. In my humble opinion, these are the two areas of the social fabric of a society where self restraint plays an important role in maintaining social justice and that is why Allah, while enumerating the objectives of keeping the fast, has enjoined a believer to avoid indulging in these social evils.

Brothers and sisters, you will bear me out that these two social evils are eating away at the social fabric of

every society, particularly the Muslim countries and the third world. It will be worthwhile to listen to the Divine admonition given in the Holy Quran in this regard:

"And swallow not up your property among yourselves by false means, nor seek access thereby to the judges, so that you may swallow up a part of the property of men wrongfully while you know." (2:188)

The Holy Quran has given detailed instructions to inculcate and promote civilised social attitude and behaviour such as good manners, sympathy and good wishes for each other and the society at large and also shows concern for the weaker sections of the society, with special emphasis on restraint of sex relations and the guaranteeing of honour and respect for women. And that is why while dealing with the details of how to observe the fast, special attention has been drawn towards the building up of a congenial and pleasant atmosphere at home. This is what the Holy Quran says in this regard:

"They (women) are an apparel for you and you are an apparel for them." (2:187) Brothers and sisters! together the husband and the wife constitute an important unit of a society, and who, through their mutual love and affection and spirit of sacrifice, usher in a pleasant and congenial domestic life, where children find a haven of care and compassion. This in reality is the crux of the wellknown saying of the Holy Prophet, "Paradise lies under the feet of the mother". By regarding woman as apparel for man, Allah has driven home the importance of woman for man in a beautiful manner. Just as dress not only covers defects and the nakedness of the body but it also enhances its outward beauty and elegance, so does a woman provide physical and mental peace and comfort to the family. This is what the Holy Quran says in the following words:

"And of His signs is this, that He created mates for you from yourselves that you might find quiet of mind in them, and He put between you love and compassion." (30:21) The word "apparel" in this verse also alludes to the patient and selfless service a woman renders not only in embellishing and decorating the home, but also in bringing up and educating the children. If I were to describe it in modern terms, she is the "interior decorator par excellence".

And now I conclude this sermon with a prayer that may Allah grant us wisdom and courage to fulfil the religious and social obligations envisaged in the institution of fasting so that we are able to inculcate in our attitude and behaviour sympathy, kindness, patience, sincerity and forbearance.

“The main difference of beliefs between the two sections are as follows”; -

Lahore Section

1. Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is khatam al-Nabiyyin, the interpretation of which is that he is the greatest and last of all the prophets.
2. The Holy Quran is the final Shariah (code) for the world.
3. No prophet, whether new or old, shall come after the Holy Prophet Muhammad.
4. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian was not a prophet but a Mujaddid (Reformer) and Promised Messiah and Mahdi in Islam.
5. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad never changed claim, views or definition of prophet hood in in 1901 with the Publication of Ek Ghalati ka Izala.
6. Belief in the advent of Mirza Sahib as a Mujaddid is not essential for becoming Muslim but his acceptance is necessary in the interest of progressive Islam.
7. Any one who profess faith in the Kalima-LA-ilaha illa Ilahu Muhammad ur Rasul Allah (there is only one God and Muhammad is His Apostle) - is a Muslim and not a Kafir.
8. It is permitted to say prayers behind any Muslim Imam provided he is not guilty of dubbing other Muslims.
9. Marriage relations with non-Ahmadis are permitted.
10. After the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) Wahi-e-Nabuwat has ceased, only Wahi-e-Walayath (Saintly revelation) is continued. Hazrat Mirza Sahib's revelation was Wahi-e- Walayath and not Wahi-e-Nabuwat.
11. The Founder of the Lahore Section was Maulana Muhammad Ali, M.A.LL.B. Translator of the Holy Quran into English, a companion and disciple of the Founder of the Movement.
12. The members of this section call themselves Ahmadis, and are generally known also as Ahmadis or Ahmadis of Lahore Movement.

Qadian Section

1. Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is khatam al- Nabiyyin, the interpretation of which is that he is the greatest though not last of all the prophets.
2. The same.
3. Prophets may come after the Holy Prophet Muhammad.
4. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was a prophet as well as Promised Messiah and Mahdi in Islam.
5. The first written evidence of the change of the belief with regard to prophet hood was the poster *EK GHALTI KA IZALA*.
6. Belief in the mission of Mirza sahib as a prophet is essential for becoming Muslim.
7. Any one, who does not believe Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian to be a Prophet, is a kafir.
8. It is not permitted to say prayers behind any Imam who does not recognize Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's claim.
9. Marriage relations with non-Ahmadis are not permitted.
10. After the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) Wahi-e-Nabuwat is continued. Hazrat Mirza Sahib's revelation was Wahi-e-Nabuwat.
11. The Founder of the Qadian Section was Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, who was the son of the Founder of the Movement and was a youngman in his teens at the time of his noble father's death.
12. The members of this section call themselves Ahmadis, but are generally known as Qadianis.

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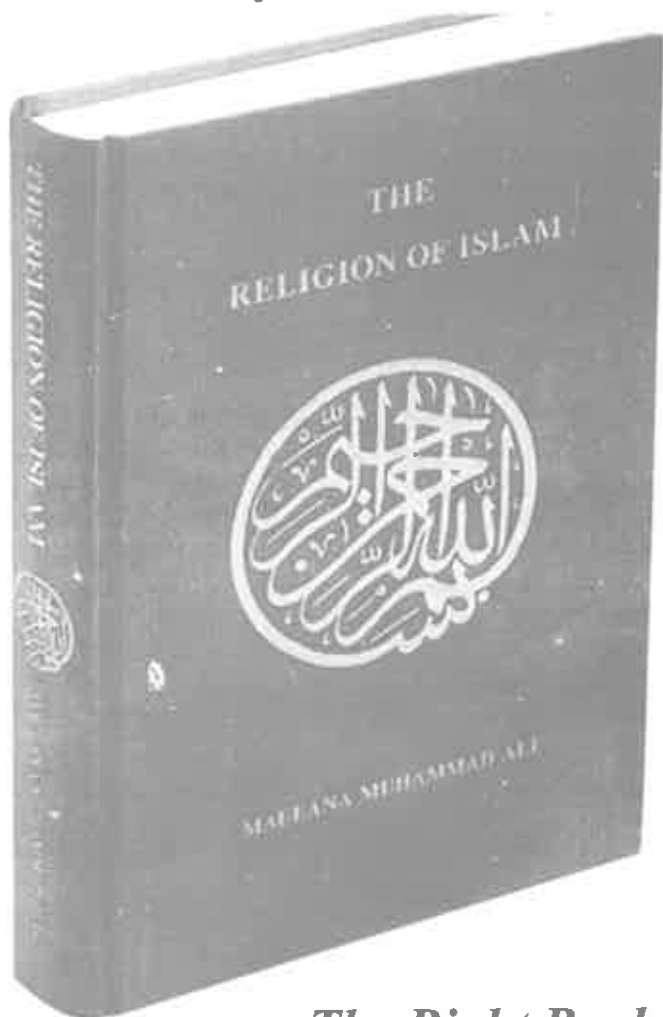
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