

Contents

January 2004, Vol.99, No.1

Editorial	<i>By Fazal Ahmad</i>	2
Eid Message	From the Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Community, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V.	3
Notes & Comment	Trading Partners: International trading is as much about moral ethical, human rights and justice than mere commercial and financial benefits. <i>By Tanveer Khokhar, UK</i>	6
The Essence of Islam, Vol.1, part 1	Start of a serialisation of extracts from various writings and books of the Promised Messiah ^(as)	8
History of the Ka'aba	Background and history of the Ka'aba and related holy sites in Makkah – <i>By Fazal Ahmad, UK</i>	16
The House of Allah	A Friday sermon from 1983 delivered by Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV ^(ru) that explored the significance of a mosque with reference to the Ka'aba.....	32
Hajj and its Significance	A short summary of the rites related to the Muslim pilgrimage to Makkah – <i>By Bilquees Cheema, Kenya</i>	38
Journey to Truth: Hinduism	A look at the teachings of Hinduism and related Prophet Krishna – <i>By Abdul Kudus Alimi, Switzerland</i>	49
The Impact of Alcohol on Society	A brief look into problems caused by alcoholism and Islamic teachings on the subject	60

Editorial Board

Basit Ahmad
Bockarie Tommy Kallon
Fareed Ahmad
Fazal Ahmad
Fauzia Bajwa
Mansoor Saqi
Mahmood Hanif
Mansoorah Hyder-Muneeb
Navida Shahid
Sarah Waseem
Saleem Ahmad Malik
Tanveer Khokhar

Chief Editor and Manager: Mansoor Ahmed Shah

Management Board:

Mr Munir-ud-din Shams
(Chairman)
Mr Mansoor Shah (Secretary)
Mr Naseer Ahmad Qamar
Mr Mubarak Ahmad Zafar
Mr Mirza Fakhar Ahmad

Special contributors:

Amatul-Hadi Ahmad
Farina Qureshi
Proof-reader:
Shaukia Mir

Design and layout:

Tanveer Khokhar
Publisher:
Al Shirkatul Islamiyyah
Distribution:
Muhammad Hanif

All correspondence should be forwarded directly to the editor at:

The Review of Religions
The London Mosque
16 Gressenhall Road
London, SW18 5QL
United Kingdom

© Islamic Publications, 2002
ISSN No: 0034-6721

Editorial

January 2004 marks the start of yet another year when people of all faiths and backgrounds will be making resolutions related to changing the way that they live. They will vow to change bad habits. For some it is a physical challenge: give up certain food and do more exercise. For others it is a time to reflect upon their behaviour and relationships, and to change themselves.

In the same way, Muslims have recently completed 30 days of fasting and renewed themselves physically as well as spiritually. Now, those fortunate few among the Muslims will be making their way towards Makkah to perform the Pilgrimage of Hajj.

To the casual onlooker, this may appear as a set of rituals performed in white robes in Makkah. But a deeper study provides an insight into the background to the Holy Mosque of Makkah itself, and the history and wisdom behind the rituals which millions of pilgrims will be performing this month.

This month's issue takes Hajj as its theme. There is an outline of the rites of Hajj and the related obligations upon Muslims performing this pilgrimage. Then there is an article delving into the history and background of the various sites in Makkah. Finally, there are extracts from a Friday Sermon delivered over twenty years ago looking at the status of a Mosque, and the events of thousands of years ago that have shaped the activities of Hajj related to the Great Mosque.

It is essential to understand the philosophy and wisdom behind the Hajj in order to fully benefit from it. It is an opportunity to make a sacrifice purely for the sake of God and thereby get closer to the Creator. Allah enable all of the pilgrims to derive the maximum benefit from this unique opportunity. Amin.

Fazal Ahmad

**Eid
Message
by Hadhrat
Mirza
Masroor
Ahmad –
Head of the
worldwide
Ahmadiyya
community**



Hadhrat Mirza
Masroor Ahmad,
Khalifatul Masih V,
conveyed Eid

greetings to every-one during his Sermon delivered on 26 November 2003 from the recently inaugurated Baitul Futuh Mosque in Morden, Surrey (UK). Some extracts from this Eidul Fitr (Eid = lit. a recurring happy day; Eidul Fitr is at the end of month of

Ramadan) Sermon are reproduced in a summarised form below:

O soul at rest that has found comfort in God, return to thy Lord, thou well pleased with Him and He well pleased with thee. Now join My

chosen servants and enter into My garden.

(Ch. 89: V.28-31)

In our faith, Eid is not for boisterous merry making, wearing of good clothes or eating and drinking. For the sake of winning Allah's pleasure, we impose upon ourselves the restrictions of the month of fasting so that we may gather His blessings.

Whereas great emphasis has been placed on worship during this month, there is also the requirement to be mindful of the needy. Do not stop by merely feeding them on Eid. Do not break the ties with the less fortunate but assess their needs from time to time and continue to help them. Helping the unemployed find a job and encouraging them would be an act of charity. So if in this spirit, each Ahmadi helps those less well off to stand on their own feet, then it is possible that the same person who was depen-

dent on your aid this year would be able to help someone else at next year's Eid. In this way, not only would economic conditions improve but moral values would also begin to rise higher and once moral values rise, other good values would also begin to emerge and a healthy environment would be established.

The Promised Messiah^(as) has said:

Moral values are the ladder to all progress. God Almighty never wastes the faith of a person who acts kindly towards others. When a person does a deed for winning the pleasure of God Almighty and deals with his weak brother with compassion, then that person's sincerity strengthens his faith. But it should be remembered that moral values displayed as a show off are not regarded as values by God Almighty

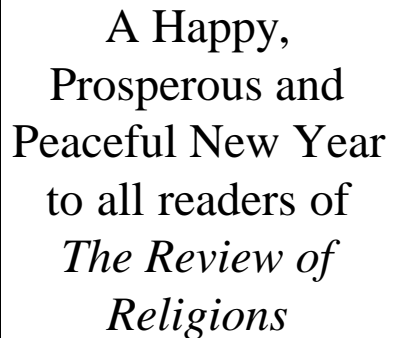
and in the absence of sincerity, they serve no use. Many people build temporary lodgings for travellers but their true purpose is fame; however, if a person does something for God Almighty then no matter how small that deed, God does not let it go waste but rewards it. It is narrated in the Traditions that a Companion asked the Holy Prophet^(sa) whether he would be rewarded for what he had spent in the age of ignorance. The Holy Prophet^(sa) responded that it was the fruit of these alms and charity that he had become a Muslim. (*Malfoozat*, Vol.7 pp 281-282).

Today we should resolve that we would maintain the habit of doing good deeds that we formed in the past 29 or 30 days. We have to raise our moral values to such a high stage that God's voice of 'thou

well pleased with Him and He well with thee' can be heard. We can only attain true happiness of Eid when the status of our prayers is high, and we are conscious of prayers in congregation, obedience to Khilafat, the rights of creation, and the pledge of initiation and allegiance. May Allah grant us the paradise of both worlds.

Amin.

Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad wished everyone Eid Mubarak and led the congregation in silent prayer.



A Happy,
Prosperous and
Peaceful New Year
to all readers of
*The Review of
Religions*

Notes and Comment

Trading Partners

International trade has a long history. From ancient times, the Silk Route and many other well worn trails enabled traders from different countries to do mutually beneficial business. Often, it was the ability to supply goods unavailable in the local markets that fuelled this trade. The Phoenicians of Lebanon were masters at trading across the Mediterranean as they ruled the seas. However, it was access to resources such as water, forests and metals that often led to disputes and wars between nations. Trade by definition was steeped in self-interest and politics, and throughout history, it was the stronger nations that prevailed and governed the rules of trade. War was always linked to trade, and it was not considered unusual for the winners to take the spoils.

In the modern enlightened era, we claim to have free and open trade. We claim that trade is moral and ethical between democratic states. In reality, the same issues of vested interest are leading to dangerous conflicts and contention.

A few recent examples highlight what is happening. Europe and the US have been consumer-led capitalist markets for years, and this has led to mounting price pressures. As a result, heavy engineering and production of vehicles, garments and other goods has moved off to cheaper workforces in Asia. Now we are seeing the service industry also taking the same step towards Asia as IT, call centre and administrative work heads towards India and China. This is not being accepted easily in Europe and the US where it is seen as fostering unemployment for financial gain. Moves are now underway to discourage this, and to impose penalties. In the US, some States have put legislation in place to prevent government administration work from being done by non-US nationals. Ironically, India itself has for a long time prevented many types of imports while and China has been relaxed on its population's ability to misuse foreign intellectual property and is only now considering copyright issues.

Another example is the trade levies imposed by countries such as the US on steel. Most industrial economies are trying to protect their key industries by imposing penalties on foreign importers and creating an unfair advantage. The European Union has been able to get over this hurdle only after it threatened similar levies on US imports.

African exporters of foodstuffs have for a long time been bitter about the pathetic prices they receive for their goods as compared to the wealth generated out of the final products such as chocolate. In fact, throughout the Third World, it is common knowledge that major corporations have unscrupulously exploited child labour in order to create shareholder wealth for themselves.

The recent Gulf War on Iraq came at a time when the US and European economies were in decline. At the end of hostilities, most discussion was on who would win contracts to rebuild Iraq rather than the immediate requirements of the local population, and those who assisted in the War were given priority by the winner (the US) who protected its rights to the spoils.

There is no easy answer in world trade. Every nation will look after own interests before it starts considering ethics or free trade. Self-interest is as alive and well as it always has been. It is but natural. The part that leaves a bitter after-taste is that the major powers try to hide behind freedom, democracy and good versus evil, whereas in fact, they mean that they have been able to protect their own financial interests.

Religion provides a different solution. Islam acknowledges that there will always be those that are more or less successful and prosperous, but warns against creating too much polarisation in society which could lead to unrest. It promotes free trade, checks abuse, prohibits monopolies and requires transactions to be honest and contractual, in writing. It makes it a duty upon Muslims to share their wealth with those that ask, and those that are unable to ask. In this way, if this is practised properly, Muslims would be able to keep a balance in their societies. It is not a huge leap of the imagination to understand how such a philosophy could also help stabilise World Trade.

Tanveer Khokhar – UK

The Essence of Islam – Vol.1, part 1

This is the first of a series to be printed over the next few months in *The Review of Religions* it sets out, in the words of the Promised Messiah^(as) Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a summary of his exposition of four outstanding topics: ISLAM; ALLAH, THE EXALTED; THE HOLY PROPHET^(sa), and THE HOLY QUR'AN. The original compilation, in Urdu, from which these extracts have been translated into English, was collated with great care and diligence by Syed Daud Ahmad, may Allah have mercy on him and may He reward him graciously for his great labour of love. Amin. The English rendering is by the late Muhammad Zafrulla Khan.

All references throughout, unless otherwise specifically mentioned, are from the Holy Qur'an.

Islam, the True and Living Faith

Islam means losing oneself for the sake of God and surrendering one's own pleasure for the pleasure of God. I perceive that through believing in Islam fountains of light are coursing through me.

The true purpose of adopting a faith is that one should acquire such certainty concerning God, Who is the fountainhead of salvation, as if one can see Him with one's eyes. The wicked spirit of sin seeks to destroy a man and a person cannot escape the fatal poison of sin till he believes with full certainty in the Perfect and

Living God and till he knows for certain that God exists, Who punishes the offender and bestows upon a righteous one every lasting joy. It is a common experience that when one believes in the fatal effects of anything one does not have recourse to it. For instance, no one swallows poison consciously. No one deliberately stands in front of a wild tiger. No one deliberately thrusts his hand into the hole of a serpent. Then why does a person commit sin deliberately? The reason is that he has not that certainty in this matter as he has in other matters of the kind that we have mentioned. The first duty of a person, therefore, is

to acquire certainty with regard to the existence of God, and to adopt a religion through which this certainty can be acquired so that he should fear God and shun sin. How can such certainty be acquired? It cannot be acquired through mere stories. It cannot be acquired through mere arguments. The only way of acquiring certainty is to experience God repeatedly through converse with Him or through witnessing his extraordinary signs, or by keeping company with someone who has that experience.

(Naseem-e-Dawat, (Qadian, Ziaul Islam Press, 1903); now printed in Ruhani Khazain, Vol.19, pp. 81-82)

The purpose of religion is that man should obtain deliverance from his passions and should develop personal love for God Almighty through certain faith in His existence and His perfect attributes. Such love of God is the paradise which will appear in diverse shapes in the hereafter. To be unaware of the true God and to keep away from Him and not to have any love for Him is the hell which will appear in diverse shapes in the hereafter. Thus the

true purpose is to have full faith in Him. Now the question is which religion and which book can fill this need. The Bible tells us that the door of converse with God is closed and that the ways of obtaining certainty are sealed. Whatever was to happen, happened in the past and there is nothing in the future. . . . Of what use then is a religion which is dead? What benefit can we derive from a book that is dead? What grace can be bestowed by a god who is dead?

(Chashmai Masihi, (Qadian, Magazine Press, 1906); now published in Ruhani Khazain (London, 1984), Vol. 20, pp.20-23)

The purpose of accepting a religion is that God, Who is Self-Sufficient and is in no need of His creation or its worship, may be pleased with us, and that we should experience such grace and mercy as should wipe out our inner stains and rusts so that our breasts may be filled with certainty and understanding. This is not possible for a man to achieve through his own devices. Therefore, God the Glorious, keeping hidden mainly His own

Being and the wonders of His creation, for instance, souls and bodies, angels, heaven, hell, resurrection and messengership etc. and yet disclosing them partially through reason, appointed his servants to believe in all these mysteries.

(Surma Chashm Arya, (Qadian, 1886); now published in Ruhani Khazain, Volume 2 (London, 1984), p. 33).

In order to recognise a true religion it is necessary to look at three matters. In the first place, one must see what is the teaching of a religion concerning God. That is to say, what does a religion state with regard to the Unity, power, knowledge, perfection, greatness, punishment, mercy and other attributes of the Divine.

Secondly, it is necessary that a seeker after truth should inquire what does a religion teach with regard to his own self and with regard to human conduct. Is there anything in its teaching which would disrupt human relationships, or would draw a person into courses which are inconsistent with modesty and honour, or



The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as).

In 1891, he claimed, on the basis of Divine revelation, that he was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) and by the scriptures of other faiths.

His claim constitutes the basis of the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

would be contrary to the law of nature, or would be impossible to conform to or carry out, or make it dangerous to do so. It would also be necessary to see whether some important teaching needed to control disorderliness has been left out. It would also be necessary to

discover whether a religion presents God as a Great Benefactor with Whom a relationship of personal love should be established and whether it lays down commandments which lead from darkness into light and from heedlessness to remembrance.

Thirdly, it is necessary for a seeker after truth to satisfy himself that the God presented by a religion should not be one Who is believed in on the basis of tales and stories and resembles a dead being. To believe in a God who resembles a dead being, belief in whom is not by virtue of His having manifested Himself but is due to one's own good faith, would be to put Him under an obligation. It is useless to believe in a God whose powers are not felt and Who does not Himself make manifest the signs of His own existence and life.

(Naseem-e-Dawat, (Qadian, Ziaul Islam Press, 1903); now printed in Ruhani Khazain, Vol.19, pp.12, 13).

The religion that claims to be from God must show Signs of being from God and should bear the seal of God which should attest the fact that it is from God. Islam is such a

religion. That God Who is hidden is known through this religion and manifests Himself to the true followers of this religion. A true religion is supported by the hand of God, and through such religion God manifests Himself that He exists. The religions that depend entirely upon stories are only a form of idol worship. Such religions do not possess the spirit of truth. If God is alive as He was, and speaks and hears as He did, there is no reason why He should continue silent as if He does not exist. If He does not speak in this age, then equally and certainly He does not hear either. In other words, He is now nothing. That religion alone is true which demonstrates that God hears and speaks in this age also. In a true religion, God attests His existence through His speaking. Search for God is a difficult matter. It is not an affair of worldly philosophers and wise men. Observation of the heavens and earth only leads to the conclusion that although orderliness indicates that the universe should have a Creator yet it is not proof that such Creator in fact exists. There is a deal of difference between ought to be and is. The

Holy Qur'an is the only book which sets forth His existence as a fact and not only urges the seeking of God but makes Him manifest. There is no other book which makes manifest the Hidden Being. (*Chashmai Masihi, (Qadian, Magazine Press, 1906); now published in Ruhani Khazain (London, 1984), Vol. 20, pp.19-20).*

Religion does not mean disputes, abuse and harsh words indulged in the name of religion. In this context, no one pays attention to the suppression of inner vices or the establishment of true relationship with the Beloved. One party attacks another party like dogs and every kind of ill conduct is exhibited in support of religion. Such people do not realise why they came into this world and what is the main purpose of their lives. They continue blind and ill-natured and give their bigoted sentiments the name of religion. They exhibit their bad manners and employ their loose tongues in support of a fictitious god of whose existence they have no proof. Of what use is a religion which does not teach the worship of a Living God? The God that

they present is no better than a corpse. He walks with the support of others. When that support is withdrawn, he falls to the ground. The only thing they gain from such a religion is bigotry. They lack altogether true fear of God and true sympathy with mankind which is the best of characteristics. (*Braheen Ahmadiyyah, Part IV, p.19).*

Two conditions are necessary for a religion which claims to be from God. In the first place, a religion should be so comprehensive and perfect and complete and free from every defect in its doctrine, teachings and commandments, that reason should not be capable of proposing anything better; and there should be nothing lacking in it. It should be ahead of all other religions in this respect. The Holy Qur'an puts forward this claim by proclaiming: *This day have I perfected your religion for your benefit, and have completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you Islam as your faith* (Ch.5:V4). That is to say, God requires us to conform to the reality inherent in the word Islam. Here there is a clear claim that the

Holy Qur'an comprehends the perfect teaching and that the time of the revelation of the Holy Qur'an was the time when such perfect teaching could be revealed. The Qur'an alone is entitled to make this claim. No other heavenly book has put forward such a claim. Both the Torah and the Gospel refrain from making this claim. On the contrary, the Torah sets out God's commandment that He would raise a Prophet from among the brethren of Israel and would put His word into his mouth and that whosoever does not lend ear to that word of God would be accountable for his default. It is obvious, therefore, that if the Torah had been adequate for meeting the needs of subsequent ages, there would have been no necessity for the coming of another Prophet, listening to whom was made obligatory. In the same way the Gospel has nowhere claimed that its teaching is perfect and comprehensive. But there is a clear confession that there were many things which had still to be said but that the disciples had not yet the strength to bear them but that when the Paraclete would come he would lead them to the

whole truth. Thus Moses confessed the incompleteness of the Torah and drew attention to the teaching of the Prophet who was to come. In the same way Jesus admitted the incompleteness of his teaching and said that the time had not yet come for the perfect teaching to be disclosed but that when the Paraclete arrives he would set forth the perfect teaching. In contrast the Holy Qur'an does not, like the Torah and the Gospel, leave the matter for another book to complete but announces the perfection of its teaching in the words: *This day have I perfected your religion for your benefit, and have completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you Islam as your faith.* (Ch.5:V.4)... Here is thus a great argument in support of Islam that by virtue of its teaching it prevails over every religion and no religion can compete with it in respect of the perfection of its teaching.

The second characteristic of Islam, which is not shared by any other religion and which attests its truth, is that it manifests its living blessings and miracles of which other religions are wholly

deprived. The signs that Islam exhibits not only establish its superiority over other religions but enable it to draw the hearts of the people by exhibiting its perfect light. The first characteristic of Islam which we have stated above, that is to say, the perfection of its teaching, is not quite conclusive in establishing that Islam is a true religion revealed by God. A bigoted opponent who is not far-sighted may assert that it is possible that a teaching might be perfect and yet it may not proceed from God Almighty. This first characteristic relieves a wise seeker after truth of many doubts and brings him close to certainty, but does not establish the matter conclusively and beyond doubt till it is combined with the second characteristic. By their combination the light of the true faith reaches its perfection. A true faith comprises thousands of proofs and lights but these two characteristics are enough to carry conviction to the heart of a seeker after truth and expound the matter to the satisfaction of all deniers of truth. Nothing more is needed in addition. I had originally intended that in support of the truth of Islam

I would set down three hundred arguments in *Braheen Ahmadiyyah*. But on further reflection I perceived that these two characteristics are a substitute for thousands of proofs and thus God made me alter my plan.

(Preface to Braheen Ahmadiyyah, Part V, pp. 2-5).

God Almighty is not held back in exposition of the claim of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him. He came like a sun and manifested his light from every point of view. He who turns away from this true sun, will come to no good. We cannot credit such a one with good faith. Can anyone who is afflicted with leprosy and whose limbs are corrupted with leprosy, claim that he is whole and is not in need of treatment? Should he say so, can we credit him with good faith? Should such a person insist that he cannot arrive at the truth of Islam, despite good faith and despite every effort such as he puts forth in his worldly affairs, his matter rests with God. We have not come across any such person and we consider it impossible that anyone equipped with reason and a sense of justice should prefer some other

faith to Islam. Foolish and ignorant people adopt the position under the dictates of their lower selves that belief in the Unity of God is enough, and that it is not necessary to follow the Holy Prophet, peace be on him; but it is to be borne in mind that a Prophet is the mother of Unity that gives birth to it and points to the existence of God. Who knows the exposition of the truth better than God Almighty Himself? He filled heaven and earth with signs to prove the truth of the Holy Prophet^(sa), and now in this age He has sent me and has displayed thousands of signs like heavy rain which prove the truth of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him. What then is lacking in the full exposition of the truth? He who has sense enough to oppose why can he not think of the way of acceptance? He who pretends that he can see at night, why can he not see in the full light of day? Indeed the way of acceptance is much easier than the way of rejection. The case of a person whose reason is defective and whose faculties are not normal should be committed to God, and we have nothing to do concerning him. He

is like children who die at an early age. But a wicked denier cannot excuse himself on the ground that he is acting in good faith. It should be considered whether his faculties are such that he can appreciate questions of Unity and Prophethood. If he is capable of appreciating them and denies out of ill-will, he cannot be excused. Can we excuse a person who observes the light of the sun and yet persists in asserting that it is not day but night. In the same way, we cannot excuse those who deliberately indulge in wrong reasoning and are unable to repel the arguments that are put forward on behalf of Islam. Islam is a living faith. A person who can distinguish between the living and the dead, how can he set aside Islam and accept a dead religion? [*Haqiqatul Wahi, (Qadian, Magazine Press 1907); now published in Ruhani Khazain (London, 1984), Vol. 22, pp. 175-176*]

History of the Ka'aba

By Fazal Ahmad – UK

One of the most recognisable religious icons in the world is the ancient House of Worship in Makkah known as the Ka'aba. Every year, millions of Muslims from around the world flock there on pilgrimage as they will be doing in January 2004.

This article traces the history of the Ka'aba from its origins, through its pagan phase and through the events till it became the centre of the Islamic World. It also takes a closer look at the Black Stone and the Well of Zum Zum.

Orientation

As a pilgrim, the walk through one of the entrances into the Haram Mosque in Makkah for the first time is an amazing feeling. As you walk through the long lit and air-conditioned prayer halls passing containers of Zum Zum water (the well situated in Makkah) along the way, in the distance you can see the glare of the sunlit or moonlit courtyard.

It is only as the pilgrims get nearer the courtyard that they are able to first make out the box shaped building in the centre of the courtyard known as the

Ka'aba and draped in a black cloth known as a *kiswah*. On one corner is the famous Black Stone known in Arabic as the *Hajr e Aswad*. The four corners of the Ka'aba face towards neighbouring countries and so have taken the names Yemeni, Iraqi, Syrian and Black (referring to the Black Stone) corners.

It is striking to see people circling the building at all hours of the day or night performing their tawaf (seven circuits of the building). Many pilgrims rush to get to the Black Stone when they see an opening in the crowd, while others wait in line to pray

at the doorway of the building. The sheer euphoria of being close to the Ka'aba, (an icon they will have grown up with from afar without fully understanding its significance) is enough to bring many pilgrims to tears. Even looking up into the sky, the feeling deepens as you see birds circling the building almost mimicking the tawaf of the human pilgrims below them. It is as if the whole of the universe sees this as the gateway to their Creator.

There are several huge gates to the modern complex such as the Umrah Gate or the King Abd al-Aziz Gate which overlooks many of the new hotels that have sprung up next to the Haram to cater for the tens of thousands of pilgrims that visit all year round.

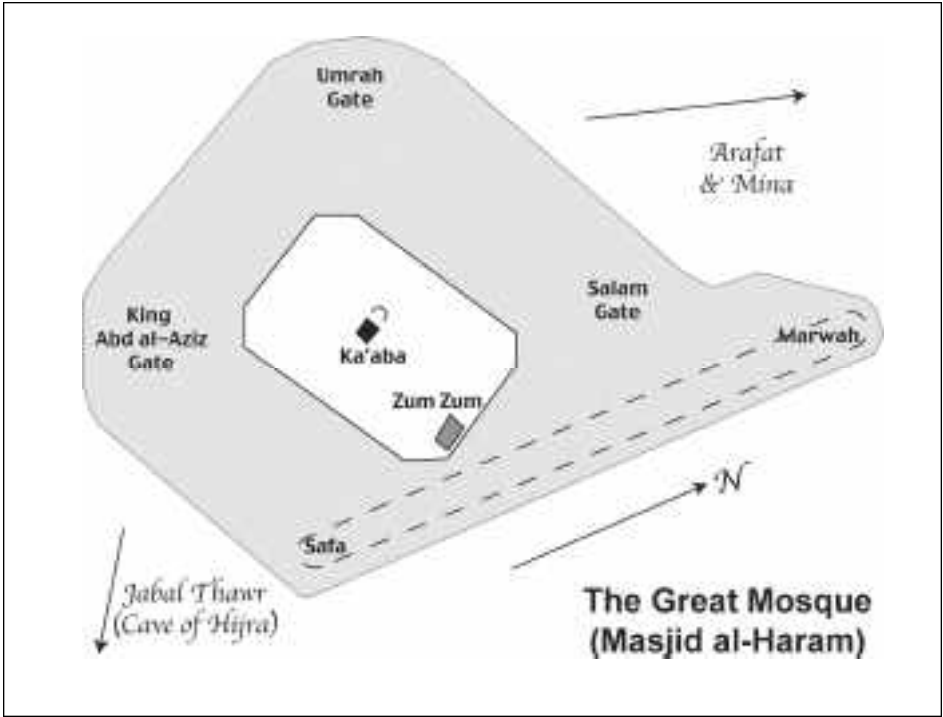
There are several other features around the central building. There is a shrine known as the Muqam-i-Ibrahim which, so the legend holds, contains the footprints of Prophet Abraham^(as) from when he was building the Ka'aba. There are the steps down



The Haram Mosque, Mecca

to the well of Zum Zum, and then there is the now-enclosed route between the two hills of Safa and Marwah where pilgrims perform circuits between the two hills.

On one side of the Ka'aba is a semi-circular wall known as Al-Hatim. This is surrounded by a 1 metre high wall around which pilgrims go when they perform their circuits. The wall actually encloses an area known as Hijr Ismail (the Enclosure of Ishmael^(as)) and in fact, a 3 metre



portion of this enclosure was originally part of the larger Ka'aba structure itself.

The visitors are struck by the religious history under their feet and all around them. As with any such place, you begin to wonder about the authenticity and history of the various features and sites.

Origins of Ka'aba

The use of the site in Saudi Arabia as a place for worship is

thought to date back to the time of Adam^(as). As such, it would have been the first House built for the worship of God. It was built in a natural valley between several hills which gave it a good secure position, but also made it prone to flooding. Hence, the structure which for centuries had no roof, had to be rebuilt several times. After Adam^(as), it is thought that it was rebuilt by his son Seth^(as).

What is more certain is that

Abraham^(as) built a structure not unlike the current building in order to worship the One true God with his son Ishmael^(as) and as such is credited with the distinction of the 'Place of Abraham' in the following verses of the Holy Qur'an:

Surely the first house founded for mankind is at Becca (the valley of Makkah), abounding in blessings and a guidance for all peoples. In it are manifest Signs; it is the place of Abraham; and whoso enters it, enters peace. And Pilgrimage to the House is a duty which men - those who can find a way thither - owe to Allah.

(Ch.3: Vs. 97-98)

At the time, the only local residents in Makkah apart from Ishmael^(as) were the tribe of Jurhum who originated from Yemen. The Qur'an confirms that Prophet Abraham^(as) was instrumental in establishing the Ka'aba for pilgrimage to worship God as it states:

And We commanded Abraham and Ishmael, saying, 'Purify My House for those who perform the circuit and those who remain therein for devotion and those who bow down and fall prostrate in prayer.'

(Ch.2: V.126)

He was then commanded to go to Mount Thabir and invite people to come for pilgrimage to this old house.

For many centuries, the guardianship of the Ka'aba remained among the descendents of Ishamel. In the centuries that followed, the structure was rebuilt several times by the tribes of Amalikah, Banu Jurhum and the Quraish.

Two centuries before the mission of the Holy Prophet^(sa), one of his ancestors Qusayy ibn Kilab took the mantle of managing the Ka'aba. He demolished and rebuilt the structure on a firmer foundation, and added a timber roof. He then built his office on one side, and allocated sides of

the structure to the local tribes. The local tribes built their houses adjacent to their allocated portion of the Ka'aba.

18 years before Hijra, the Ka'aba once again fell prone to flooding. The Ka'aba was this time rebuilt by the Egyptian carpenter Baqum using teakwood recovered from a wrecked Byzantine ship, and local stone.



Djinn blocks of Dushara, Petra

Decline to Paganism

From the time of Abraham^(as), his progeny included the Hebrew tribes who followed Moses^(as) and adopted the new religion of Judaism. This new religion also spread into Arabia through the migration of the Jews to towns such as Madinah. However, Judaism was exclusive to the Hebrews and was not preached to the Arabs, who followed their own pagan beliefs. This included the worship of pagan deities such as al-Lat (a goddess whose idol was housed in Taif), al-Uzza (goddess whose shrine was

located in the Nakhla valley near Mecca, and was similar to the Greek goddess Venus) and al-Manat (goddess whose temple was at Qudayd on the Red Sea). All of these deities were shared with other local cultures such as the Nabateans and appeared in Petra and other sites. Indeed the Nabateans had been very close to the Quraish of Makkah.

Even at the time of Abraham^(as), he had to keep his people from polluting the Ka'aba with idols and to explain to them that this

was a symbolic house of God, but that God did not live there physically as He was Omnipresent. Following his death, the people again started placing idols in the Ka'aba. Over a period of time, the pagan beliefs became more and more obscure. Worship now took the form of chanting, whistling and dancing around the temple. An onlooker would have been puzzled as to what these people were doing. Deities such as Dushara would require animal sacrifices such as camels. Al-Lat was the companion of Dushara.

Other religions also respected the Ka'aba. The Sabaeans respected Ka'aba as one of their seven holy sanctuaries. Persians believed that the spirit of Hormuz was present here and would come on their own pilgrimage. There are even traditions claiming that the Hindu deity Siva visited here while travelling in the Hejaz.

The moral fabric of Arabia had not been enriched by this idol worship and paganism. The Arabs were known to be a

treacherous race who did not value their ladies and daughters, and who were less than trustworthy in trade. History had shown that other nearby races such as the Thamud had been destroyed because of their misdeeds.

The paganism of Arabia which centred around the Ka'aba was socially destructive. The Arabs felt that they could get what they needed without needing to resort too far to their deities, but in the case of Makkah, it had become a good revenue earner around the pilgrims that visited the site. It would take the advent of Islam to destroy the idols and restore sanity to the Arabs.

Attack by Abraha

Just before the birth of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) in 570, the site was the subject of a bizarre attack which is the subject of a chapter in the Holy Qur'an (Al-Fil – the Elephant). At that time, Makkah was a pagan town on a major trade route to Syria which also took in other famous stops such as Petra,

COULD THIS VERSE HAVE BEEN REFERRING TO THE CORNERSTONE OF THE KA'ABA, THE BLACK STONE IN MAKKAH? WHEN THE JEWS BUILT THE TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM, THEY HAD REJECTED THE HOUSE OF GOD AND THE STONE FROM THE TIME OF ABRAHAM^(AS). HOWEVER, WITH THE IMPENDING DAWN OF ISLAM, THAT STONE WHICH HAD LAPSED INTO THE HANDS OF PAGANS WOULD SOON BECOME THE 'CHIEF CORNERSTONE' AS THE WHOLE WORLD WOULD FACE TOWARDS IT TO PRAY TO THE ONE GOD.

the rose-red city carved out of rock in southern Jordan, and Damascus in modern Syria. To the South, the Christians in Yemen were becoming perturbed, and chose to send an army led by Abraha, the Christian viceroy of Abyssinia to attack the Ka'aba. They wanted their local Church in San'a to be a greater attraction than the Ka'aba.

The most striking feature of the army was that it also had an elephant, hence the name of the chapter in the Qur'an. The Makkan chiefs (including Abd al-Muttalib, grandfather of the Holy Prophet^(sa)) tried to negotiate with Abraha, but he had his mission and was intent to

carry it out. It was then that Divine intervention took over. The army was struck down with smallpox and utterly destroyed without even reaching the battlefield.

Islamic Victory

The Black Stone needed to be replaced in the corner of the Ka'aba in its housing after the structure was rebuilt following local floods. The various tribal leaders felt that it was a matter of honour as to who should replace the Stone, and this was creating tension between the tribal leaders.

It was therefore a great sign of wisdom when the young Holy

Prophet^(sa) suggested an approach in which the Stone was placed on a cloth, and then all of the tribal leaders were able to maintain their status and dignity by each holding a corner of the cloth as the Stone was restored to its rightful place by the Holy Prophet^(sa) himself (who at that time was respected for being trustworthy even though he had not declared his Divine mission yet).

As Muhammad^(sa) proclaimed his mission, he was rejected by many of the people of Makkah and driven out of the city. He returned victorious a few years later in a bloodless victory most famous for the manner in which he then forgave the people that had tortured and killed him and so many of his early followers. He went straight to the Ka'aba and after performing seven circuits around the house, he then destroyed each of the 360 idols in the structure including the idol of Hubal who had apparently inspired attacks against the Muslims. There was an idol for each day of the lunar year. As

each idol fell, he said 'truth has come and falsehood has vanished away.'

The Prophet^(sa) then entrusted Umar^(ra) with the duty of eradicating the pictures from the walls of the Ka'aba.

After that point and ever since, the Ka'aba was restored as a place of pilgrimage for Muslims who believed in One God. The pagan shrines were once again removed, never to return.

The Qur'an describes the significance of the Ka'aba for Muslims:

Allah has made the Ka'aba the inviolable House, as a means of support and uplift for mankind, as also the Sacred Month and the offerings and the animals with collars. That is so that you may know that Allah knows what is in the heavens and what is in the earth, and that Allah knows all things well.

(Ch.5: V.98)

The Black Stone

The Black Stone itself is thought to be of meteoritic origin according to tradition. As the name suggests, it is black in colour with red and yellow mineral colours. The stone is roughly an oval shape. It was safeguarded in the mountain of Abu Qubays and incorporated into the Ka'aba by Abraham^(as).

The meteorite was held as significant because it came from the heavens, and adorned the house of worship for the Creator of the Universe.

There was even a local legend that the stone was given to Adam^(as) on his fall from paradise and was white. The stone apparently turns black when absorbing the sins of the various pilgrims that touch and kiss it, but clearly this is just local mythology.

For the modern pilgrims, they start and end their circuits of the Ka'aba at the station marked by the Black Stone, and each time they pass the stone, they either

move closer to the Ka'aba and if they get the opportunity, kiss the stone, or make a symbolic gesture towards it with their arms raised.

This gesture towards the stone is only following the practice of the Holy Prophet^(sa) as narrated by the second Caliph Umar^(ra):

'I know this is only a stone no different from other similar stones, and were it not the memory that the Prophet^(sa) expressed his gratitude to God for His favours and bounties by kissing it, I would pay no attention to it.'

(Sahih Bukhari)

Some scholars suggest that the Stone may even be referred to in the Bible. For example, in Psalm 118 in the Old Testament, we read the following:

'The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.'

(Psalm 118:22)

Could this have been a metaphorical reference to a stone, or a

OVER A PERIOD OF TIME, THE GREAT MOSQUE HAS BEEN EXPANDED AND IMPROVED WITH THE OUTER WALL CONTINUALLY EXPANDED OUTWARDS, THE COURTYARD BEING SURROUNDED BY COVERED PRAYER HALLS, AND THE WELL OF ZUM ZUM MOVING UNDERGROUND. THIS PERIOD OF CONSTRUCTION GOES RIGHT BACK TO THE FIRST CALIPHS, UMAR^(RA) AND UTHMAN^(RA).

literal reference to the Black Stone?

Jesus^(as) then referred to this Psalm when debating with the chief priests and elders in the Temple of Jerusalem about their failure to accept the messengers sent to the Jews. Jesus^(as) went on to say:

‘Have you never read in the scriptures: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes.”? Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be

broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.’

(Matthew 21:42-44)

We could understand at a high level that Jesus^(as) was announcing the end of prophethood for the Jews, and that a new line would begin for the people of Ishmael^(as) that were in Arabia. The fact that he mentions the Psalm in the same context could also signify that the people of Ishmael^(as) were the same people that had acted as guardians of ‘the stone’ while Judaism had flourished.

Abraham^(as) was considered the father of Judaism and constructed the Ka’aba on the instructions of God. Could this verse have been referring to the

cornerstone of the Ka'aba, the Black Stone in Makkah?. When the Jews built the Temple of Jerusalem, they had rejected the House of God and the Stone from the time of Abraham^(as).

However, with the impending dawn of Islam, that stone which had lapsed into the hands of pagans would soon become the 'chief cornerstone' as the whole world would face towards it to pray to the One God.

Qibla

For Muslims, part of the global unity is that they all pray in one direction. To start with, Makkah and the Ka'aba were in pagan hands and the Muslims had been forced to flee and seek sanctuary in Madinah. The direction for prayers (*Qibla*) was originally set to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem which was held as a bastion of monotheistic belief whereas at the time, Makkah was still associated largely with idol worship.

While leading prayers in the mosque of the Banu Salimah in Madinah, the Holy Prophet^(sa)

was commanded to change the direction from Jerusalem to Makkah to complete his prayers, and his congregation followed his change of direction mid-prayer.

The Qur'an describes this incident as follows:

Verily, We see thee turning thy face often to heaven; surely, then, will We make thee turn to the Qibla which thou likest. So turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you be, turn your faces towards it.

(Ch.2: V.145)

Since then, that mosque has the name Masjid Qiblatain (*the Mosque of the two Qiblas*) and Muslims have always prayed in the direction of the house of God in Makkah.

Disruption and Strife

In its early years, schisms were forming within Islam over the rightful successors and leaders of the faith, and the political status of the various Arab states.

Unfortunately, the Ka'aba, whilst being a focus for all Muslims around the globe, also became a victim of the feuding.

In 684, Makkah was under the occupation of Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr, and was besieged by the Umayyad army. A blazing arrow from the army set fire to the Ka'aba and destroyed the structure. The destruction also caused the fracturing of the Black Stone into three pieces. It was repaired and held together with Silver.

In the year 930, the Qarmatians (a Gnostic sect in Islam from Iraq) raided Makkah and carried off the Black Stone to Bahrain where it was held under threat of a ransom. When it was returned in 951 on the persuasion of the Fatimid Caliph al-Mansur, it was now in seven pieces.

Construction of the Modern Mosque

Over a period of time, the Great Mosque has been expanded and improved with the outer wall continually expanded outwards,

the courtyard being surrounded by covered prayer halls, and the well of Zum Zum moving underground.

This period of construction goes right back to the first Caliphs, Umar^(ra) and Uthman^(ra). The area around the Ka'aba was not densely populated at the time, and the Caliphs knew that space would become more important as Islam grew. They therefore compensated local residents and bought land around the site. Umar^(ra) built an enclosure around the ka'aba with gates and lamps, and then Uthman^(ra) built modest covered prayer halls around the central courtyard.

In 684, following the Umayyad attack, Ibn az-Zubayr had the structure rebuilt out of stone and enlarged. He also had the Black Stone repaired and held together using Silver. He used mosaics and columns from a huge church in the Yemen (ironically built by Abraha who had attempted to destroy the ka'aba earlier) to decorate the covered prayer halls. By the 9th century, the



The Haram Mosque, Mecca

Haram Mosque had grown to something like its modern appearance. It had an outer wall with large minarets and covered prayer halls. The Ka'aba and Zum Zum were in the large square courtyard.

In 1571, the architect Sinan (more famous for his mosque construction in Istanbul) rebuilt the Haram complex using 892 marble columns, and this was complemented by gold calligraphy. At this time, the mosque could accommodate over 35,000 worshippers.

The modern era of construction began in 1955 under the auspices of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia due to the growing demands of the huge throng of worshippers annually for Hajj (the pilgrimage). The mosque was enlarged to hold hundreds of thousands of worshippers. It had new floors for extra accommodation. It also adopted modern technology in the form of ceiling fans and other mechanisms to keep the temperature bearable for worshippers.

Probably one of the most noticeable changes was when the track between the hills of Safa and Marwah was enclosed and covered. The modern pilgrim sees a long tiled floor with a dip in the middle, and then a rise to some rocks at either end where the actual 'hills' are. There is a sign near the middle to signify the time when the pilgrim is expected to run rather than walk between the two hills. The actual significance is less obvious now that the course is covered and enclosed in this way. In reality, this relates to the story of when the wife of Abraham^(as) was running between the hills searching for water for her baby. There was a dip where she lost sight of her baby and would run until she once again had line of sight to her child. It is at that point that pilgrims also run.

Kiswah

(Covering of the Ka'aba)

The Ka'aba itself has been covered by a cloth with Arabic inscriptions for many centuries, known as the Kiswah. The reader is probably familiar with the

black embroidered silk and cotton fabric that adorns the Ka'aba today.

What may be more surprising is that the Kiswah was at various times made of red and then green cloth. It was not until the time of Khalifa al-Nasir Al-Abbasi (1180 - 1225) that the colour of the cloth was changed to black, and it has remained black ever since.

The Kiswah is changed every year, and the old cloth is cut into pieces and distributed among various institutions and to pilgrims as a souvenir of their visit.

Well of Zum Zum

The spring of Zum Zum is situated very close to the Ka'aba and originates from the time of Abraham^(as) when his wife Hagira was searching for water for their baby son Ishmael^(as). Water appeared and trickled down the hill, and this was the discovery of the spring of Zum Zum.

After many centuries, the Well was covered and forgotten, and it was only at the time of Abd Al-

Muttalib, the grandfather of the Holy Prophet^(sa) that the well was re-discovered just after the incident with Abraha described earlier. Traditions suggest that he was guided to dig the well in a vision.

There are other wells in the area such as Al-Yusrah and Ar-Rwa near the mount of Arafah. Zum Zum itself comes from a source underground some 35 metres deep.

As Islam spread into North Africa, the Moorish converts to Islam were keen to show close links with the origins of Islam. Traditions exist in Kairouan, modern Tunisia, in which at the time of the founding of Kairouan by Uqba ibn Nafi in 670, the military leader dug to find water and was amazed to see his old vessel from Makkah floating in there. The inference was that the local well was linked directly to Zum Zum.

Obviously this is the stuff of legend and not based in fact, but it reflects the need of the distant

Muslims to have a connection to the Ka'aba. The Muslims in different countries already prayed in the direction of Makkah, but they also wished that they had a hereditary direct connection not just to the line of the Holy Prophet^(sa), but also to the Ka'aba, the nerve centre of Islam.

Most pilgrims are taught that the water will cure ailments, and that the same original well has been serving millions of pilgrims since the start of time. Certainly, to the pilgrim, the water tastes wonderful and refreshing, and it is a tradition to take home a supply of Zum Zum for family and friends. Even scientific research conducted in 1971 following doubts raised by an Egyptian showed that the water was very rich in Calcium, Magnesium and Fluorides which make it taste very good and also have a germicidal effect which is obviously very beneficial for pilgrims in this harsh climate.

It is however likely that the original well was running dry a long time ago, and it required

other local wells and sources to be connected to Zum Zum in order to keep the supply active.

Conclusions

We have seen how the Ka'aba has a line of religious activity traced back to Abraham^(as) and that although it had periods of pagan activity, the larger period has seen it as a place of worship of the One True God.

Makkah provides inspiration for millions of Muslims around the globe and unites them in their five daily prayers.

The Ka'aba is the centrepiece of the establishment of monotheism in Arabia. It has attracted millions of pilgrims for Hajj and Umrah, and even other great messengers such as Guru Baba Nanak^(as) are known to have visited here on pilgrimage.

For the pilgrims to Makkah, understanding the history and background of the Ka'aba helps greatly in appreciating the places and activities involved in their pilgrimage.

References

1. *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Cyril Glasse, Harper San Francisco 1999.
 2. *Rushdie - Haunted by his unholy ghosts*, Arshad Ahmed, Avon Books, London 1997.
 3. *Life of Muhammad*, Hadhrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, Islam International Publications 1990.
 4. *The Mosque - History, architectural development and regional diversity*, Martin Frishman & Hasan-uddin Khan, Thames & Hudson Ltd, London 1994.
 5. *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth*, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Islam International Publications 1998.
 6. *Islam - A short history*, Karen Armstrong, Pheonix Press, London 2001.
 7. *The Ka'aba- House of Allah*, Mrs Rashida Hargey, Review of Religions, Vol.92, No.5/6.
 8. *Stories of the Prophets*, Imam Ibn Kathir (700 - 774 AH), Darussalam Publishers, Riyadh.
 9. *Zum Zum water - A Miracle*, Moinuddin Ahmed, based upon research conducted by Tariq Hussein of Riyadh.
 10. *Perished Nations*, Harun Yahya, Ta-Ha Publishers, Istanbul 2001.
-

The House of Allah

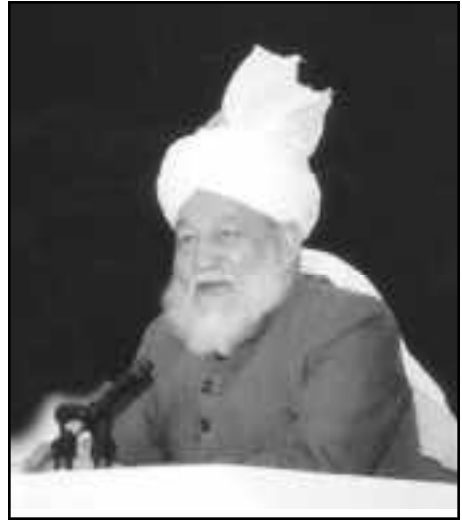
The following are extracts from a Sermon delivered by Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV on Friday 2nd September 1983 in Pakistan. (Picture on right is a later photograph)

Call to mind when Abraham prayed: My Lord, make this city Inviolate, and keep me and my progeny away from the worship of idols.

My Lord, they have indeed led astray large numbers of people.

So whoever follows me, he is certainly of me; and whoever disobeys me, in his case also Thou art surely Most Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

Our Lord, I have settled some of my progeny in a barren valley near Thy sacred House, that they may perform Salat with due observation, our Lord. So make people's hearts incline towards them and provide them with fruits



of all kinds that they may be grateful.

Our Lord, Thou certainly knowest that which we conceal and that which we make known; nothing whatsoever is hidden from Allah, whether in the earth or in the heaven.

(Ch.14: Vs.36-39).

Within a few days, we shall, if Allah so wills, start from Pakistan on our tour of the East and in the course of this tour, I have to perform the top most



The Ahmadiyya Community Mosque in Sydney, Australia

obligation of laying the foundation of the first Ahmadiyya Mosque in the continent of Australia. This will be a foundation of a Mosque and also of a Mission House. This means that along with the mosque, a Mission house will also be constructed where the Missionary-in-Charge will be able to carry out all his responsibilities. This Mosque possesses a special significance in the history of the Ahmadiyya Movement inasmuch as we are being enabled to lay the foundation of this Mosque in a

new continent. Hitherto, this continent had been empty.

The Movement could claim that it had conveyed the message of Islam by the Grace of Allah in all the continents, but, so far as the continent of Australia was concerned, the message was conveyed through the efforts of individuals.

The Movement had not hitherto established any regular Mission, nor had any Mosque been constructed.

The site that has been acquired for this Mosque has, by Allah's Grace, a large area which is well situated. It is within fifty miles of the well known Australian town of Sydney, which is not much of a distance. The area of the site on which the Mosque and the Mission House will, if Allah so desires, be constructed, is a little more than 27 acres, and it can provide accommodation of all aspects of the activities of the Movement.

Our Annual Conference can also be held there. We have acquired such a large area in the hope that Allah would be pleased to fill it soon and within a short time make it too small for our growing needs and thus Divine Grace may outrun our expectations. The foundation stone of this Mosque will, Allah willing, be laid with these supplications.

Surely the first House established for the benefit of all mankind is the one at Becca.

(Ch.3: v.97)

Allah has here used the expression 'all mankind' which indicates that this House was constructed for neither the Muslims, nor Hindus, nor Christians, but for the whole of mankind for carrying out the worship of Allah. It was intended that here would, in due course, be born the Prophet^(sa) through whom the whole of mankind would be gathered together under the banner of one faith. The fact is that the whole world could be gathered together under one hand only twice, once in the beginning, and finally towards the end.

Prophethood began with Adam^(as) when mankind was not divided. Adam^(as) must have constructed a house for the worship of Allah, which indicates that Adam^(as) laid the foundation of this House. As there was no division at that time, Adam^(as) was the whole of mankind. He was the seed which God selected for the propagation of His Word. A second time the whole of mankind could be addressed after the advent of the Prophet^(sa) who would be

designated for calling the whole of mankind to one religion and that Prophet was Muhammad^(sa). It was said that it was constructed for the whole of mankind. When it was built, all mankind was related to it and in the end also, the whole of mankind will gather together in it for the worship of one God, which means that he who was to be a mercy for the universe (Ch.21:v.108) and was to be a bearer of glad tidings and a Warner would have appeared for the whole of mankind (Ch.34:v.29). That is why I have said that the principal purpose of the construction of the first House was the advent of Muhammad^(sa), the Chosen One, peace be on him. With his advent, the purpose of the construction of the House was accomplished.

When was this glorious House constructed? The details connected therewith are not mentioned in the history of mankind. It is the Holy Qur'an alone which has mentioned that the first House constructed for the worship of Allah is the one which is close to Makkah. The Holy

Qur'an has, however, described its new construction in some detail and thus the principal events related to the reconstruction of the House by Abraham^(as) have been preserved for ever for the guidance of those who may desire to build a House of Allah. If a house is built without following the example of Abraham^(as) and without keeping in mind the spirit that had inspired Abraham^(as), it has no meaning and no importance. People construct great houses for the sake of God and spend millions and millions upon their construction, yet they have no relationship to the House which was reconstructed by Abraham^(as). No kingdom spent its treasures in its construction, no engineers gathered together to make its plans, no great architects assembled together, no workmen were pressed into service.

Allah only mentions that when the Ka'aba was reconstructed, the father was the builder and the son was the labourer. The son was of an age when he could just run about. The Prophet of God,

Abraham^(as), built this house with his own hands, he collected the stones that were needed, he dug afresh the foundations which had been covered up by sand. The Holy Prophet^(sa) has said that when Abraham^(as) had brought his wife, Hajirah and son Ishmael^(as), he looked diligently for traces of the first House of Allah. At last, he noticed traces of a small wall showing through the sand which gave an indication of the ruined House that had been built in ages past.

Abraham^(as) placed his little son on the stone that was visible and then began to consider in what manner the House could be rebuilt. But for Ishmael's participation in the reconstruction, it was postponed by God for a later time and Abraham^(as) was commanded to leave his wife and little son till the boy should be old enough to participate in the reconstruction of the House.

There was great wisdom in the Divine plan for the postponement of the reconstruction of the House.

One consideration was that Abraham's son who was to be the progenitor of Muhammad^(sa), whereby the descendants of Ishmael^(as) were to be distinguished from the descendants of Isaac^(as), was not yet old enough to participate in the construction of the House. Secondly, he was being left in a valley where there was neither provision for water nor for food and yet Allah had informed Abraham^(as) that the latter was to reconstruct the House. This was a guarantee and a firm assurance from God that till Ishmael^(as) grew up so as to join his father in the reconstruction of the House, he would be under God's protection.

This was a glorious manifestation of God's love, both for Abraham^(as) and for Ishmael^(as). It also indicates how great was the trust of Abraham^(as) in his Lord, that he was leaving his wife and son entirely to His Gracious Mercy. The Holy Prophet^(sa) has mentioned that when Abraham^(as) was about to depart, he suddenly faced in a certain direction, leaving a small skinful of water

and some dates with his wife. She felt that he was leaving them and she asked him whether he intended to depart. But Abraham^(as) returned no answer. She ran after him, but he was in no condition to answer her. His eyes were wet and he feared that if he tried to speak, he might break down. At last Hajirah entreated him to tell her whether he was leaving them under Divine direction. There was a special purpose in Hajirah's question. She had been wedded by Abraham^(as) when he was already married to Sarah and she knew that Sarah was jealous of her and had asked Abraham^(as) several times to get rid of Hajirah.

This was the purpose behind her question. She wanted to know whether Abraham^(as) was acting under Divine direction, or out of a desire to please Sarah. In answer to her question, Abraham^(as) nodded and raised his finger in the direction of heaven. This gesture reassured Hajirah and she returned to Ishmael^(as).

The two great events of those years were the reconstruction of the House in which both father and son participated, and the readiness of both father and son to carry out what they conceived was the Divine command that Ishmael^(as) should be sacrificed. The whole background is most moving and glorious. It reveals the depth of the love that surged between Allah and Abraham^(as). The House that was reconstructed was a very simple structure, but that simple structure has been the centre of God's most loving looks. In his supplications made at the time of the reconstruction of the House, Abraham^(as) had prayed for the advent of Muhammad^(sa) through whom the House was to be redevoted to the worship of the One God. Abraham's prayer was answered in the terms that he had himself employed and in due course the advent of Muhammad^(sa), the Chosen One, took place.

Hajj and its Significance

By Bilquees Cheema – Nairobi, Kenya

The annual pilgrimage to the Sacred Mosque in Makkah and the assemblance on the plains of Arafat and associated rites is the greatest spectacle of the physical unity of mankind under the Oneness of God Almighty. Clad in similar garb, the rich and the poor, the black and white, the young and old and male and female gather in one place.

Once I listened to the ‘Question and Answer’ session with Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV^(ru) on MTA International Television. A question was asked about Hajj that, if, despite having all the provisions and facilities for offering Hajj, one does not make the journey, is one disobeying God and committing a sin? In reply to this question, Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV^(ru) confirmed that it is indeed a sin because Hajj is obligatory upon every Muslim who can afford the expenses related to Hajj and has the access to Makkah.

Hajj is the fifth act of worship. It is obligatory upon every adult Muslim who can afford to undertake the journey and has safe passage to Makkah.

And Pilgrimage to the House is a duty which men – those who can find a way to thither – owe to Allah.

(Ch.3: v.98)

Hajj is performed only once in a year during the Islamic month of Dhul-Hijjah. It starts on the 8th of Dhul-Hijjah and continues up to the 13th. The Ka’bah is the focal point of Hajj. The Ka’bah is the first place of worship of Allah. It was built by His command some four thousand years ago.

Surely the first house founded for mankind is that at Becca (the valley of Makkah) abounding in blessing and a guidance for all peoples.

(Ch.3: v.97)

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah says:

And complete the Hajj and the Umrah for the sake of Allah; but if you are kept back, then make whatever offering is easily available; and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches its destination. And whoever among you is sick or has an ailment of the head should make expiation either by fasting or almsgiving or a sacrifice. But when you are safe, then he who would avail himself of the Umrah together with the Hajj should make whatever offering is easily obtainable. But such of you as cannot find an offering should fast three days during the pilgrimage, and seven when you return home; these are ten complete. This is for him whose family does not reside near the Sacred Mosque. And fear Allah and know that Allah is severe in punishment.

(Ch.2: v.197)

There are many benefits in Hajj. For instance it gives the opportunity for Muslims to visit Makkah, the birth place of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa). Makkah has a great significance in the history of Islam. It has the History of Prophet Ibrahim^(as), Hajirah^(as) and Ismael^(as). In fact while performing Hajj many such acts are performed in their remembrance. By performing the Hajj, all Muslims around the world are bound to a relationship of brotherhood and unity. The most benefit is to get the opportunity of offering prayers and get closer to Allah the Almighty.

The journey of Hajj starts from home. It is essential to fulfill the requirements of Saudi Arabia and the country you are departing from. If the law forbids someone to enter the country, it is recommended to obey the rules. This is what the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) did when he was not allowed to enter Makkah; he respected the law and postponed it to the next year. During the journey for Hajj, it is preferable,

but not obligatory, to go in a group of at least three people. One of them should be considered as the Amir. However, a male person can also go for Hajj alone.

Before departing from home the pilgrim should take a bath and pray two ra'kaat of *Nawafil*. It is also recommended to pay *sadaqa*. Pilgrims should pray for the success of their purpose and of the voyage. They should pray in their own language, but the following Arabic prayer is also recommended:

*Subhaana Ilahi
walhamdulillahi wa laa ilaha
ila llah wallahu akbaru
wala hawla wala quwwata
illa bi Ilahie 'aliyyi I adhem*

(Holy are Thou, and all praise belong to Allah. And there is no one worthy of worship except Allah. God is the Greatest and there is no might nor power except with Allah the Most High, Most Great.)

The Hajj starts when the pilgrim

reaches certain designated places close to Makkah (there are several designated places depending upon the direction from which the pilgrim is approaching Makkah). In those places the pilgrim changes to the state of *Ihraam*.

The *Ihraam* consists of two seamless sheets wide enough to cover the entire body properly. The *Ihraam* cloths should be white. For a female pilgrim, she can wear her normal dress, which covers her body from head to toe. She should not cover her face in the state of *Ihram*. Before putting on *Ihraam*, the pilgrim should have a bath and wear perfume as well. The moment the pilgrim is in the state of *Ihraam*, all worldly affairs are prohibited including physical relationship with the spouse. The pilgrims are not allowed to wear any seamed garments like coats, shirts, socks or shoes. For ladies, applying of make-up is also prohibited. Cutting nails is also not allowed. The pilgrim has to avoid any arguments, quarrel or fighting. Hunting is totally prohibited;

even cutting the trees or plants also stands in this regulation. However after the state of Ihraam, one can have a bath, comb the hair put on perfume or deodorant, and can change into another pair of Ihraam clothes. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

The months of Hajj are well known; so whoever determines to perform the pilgrimage in these months, should remember that there is to be no foul talk, nor any transgression, nor any quarrelling during the pilgrimage. And whatever good you do, Allah knows it. And furnish yourselves with necessary provisions for your journey, and surely the best provision is righteousness. And fear Me alone, O men of understanding.
(Ch.2: v.198)

An important aspect of Hajj that relates to ladies is that upon putting on the Ihraam if she reaches the period of menstruation, she can participate in all the ceremonies of the Hajj

except the tawaaf (circuits of the Ka'aba). It is clearly indicated by various AHadith, but for the benefit of the readers I would like to mention only two of them.

It is related that on the way to Hajj, the wife of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(as) gave birth to a child named Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr. She sent a messenger to inform the Holy Prophet^(sa) about the birth of the child and asked whether she should continue with the Hajj. The reply was that she should have a bath and complete the Hajj.

In another Hadith it is related that when the Holy Prophet^(sa) went for Hajj, his wives also accompanied him. On the way to Makkah two of his wives started their menses, so they also consulted the Holy Prophet^(sa) for their status; he gave a similar statement and said that you may continue your journey for Hajj except the Tawaaf, which can be carried out after the menses, and after having bath.

After the Ihraam, the Hajj starts

with the Niyaah (intention) and Talbiyyah. Talbiyyah is the declaration of the presence to the Hajj and it should be made in a loud voice and be repeated. For ladies it is prohibited to say it loudly. They should say it in a low voice. It is preferable to say it in Arabic, but if one does not know Arabic, one can say it in their own language. It is as follows:

*Labbayka Allahumma
labbayka, labbayka laa
shariika laka labbayka, Inna
lhamda wa ni'mata laka
walmullka, laa sharika lak*

‘Here we come, O God, here we come. No partner have You, here we come. Indeed praise and blessings are Yours, and the kingdom too. No partner have you, here we come.

Now the pilgrim has to make the journey towards Makkah. As soon as the pilgrim reaches Makkah, the sacred city, he should engage in prayers and tasbih and ask Allah’s

forgiveness. During the entire journey, the pilgrim should recite the Talbeeh frequently. As soon as the pilgrim reaches Masjid al Haram and can see the Ka’aba, he should pray to Allah; and it is said that as soon as you have the first sight of the Ka’aba, whatever you ask will be accepted by Allah, the Almighty.

The pilgrim has to walk around the Ka’aba seven times anti-clockwise. This is called *Tawaaf*. During the *Tawaaf* he can recite any prayer. The following is recited during each circuit:

*Rabbanaa aatinaa fidunnya
hasanatan wa fil aakhirah
hasanatan waqinaa
adhaabannaar*

‘O our God give us good in this world and good in the world to come and save us from the punishment of hell.’

After the *Tawaaf* the pilgrim should try to kiss the ‘hajar aswad’ (Black Stone). While kissing the stone he touches the

stone with both hands or at least with his right hand. However, due to the large crowds of people, it is difficult and one would be extraordinarily fortunate to reach the stone. If they do not get that opportunity then they can just wave from far and kiss their hand. After finishing the Tawaaf, he should offer two nawafil near Muqram-e-Ibrahim and if he feels thirsty, he can drink Zum Zum water nearby.

After completing the tawa'af the pilgrims perform the Sa'ee. This is the part-walking and part-running between the hills of Safa and Marwa near Ka'aba. These are the two hills between which Hajira^(as) ran in search of water for her son Hadhrat Ismael^(as). In the Holy Qur'an Allah says:

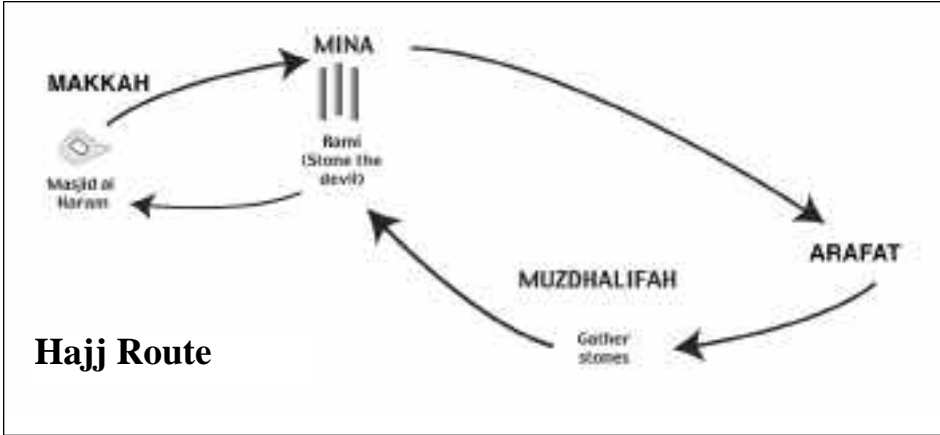
Surely, Al Safaa and Al-Marwah are among the Signs of Allah. It is therefore no sin for him who is on pilgrimage to the House or performs Umrah to go around the two. And whoso does good beyond what is obligatory, surely

then, Allah is appreciative of good deeds and All-Knowing.

(Ch.2: v.159)

After performing the Sa'ee the pilgrims move to Mina, a plain located about four miles east of Makkah and spend a night there. During the journey the pilgrims have to recite the Tabiyyah all the time and engage themselves in prayers. According to a Hadith the Holy Prophet^(sa) prayed the whole night at the plain of Mina. After the Fajr prayer, the pilgrim should move to Arafaat.

Arafat is a deserted plain situated nine miles away from Makkah and six miles from Mina. The area is around 12 miles square. During the Hajj season the plain is covered with tents. Here most of the pilgrims offer Zuhr and Asr prayers. The Zuhr and Asr prayers are joined in accordance to the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad^(sa). The pilgrim may offer the prayers in congregation or alone.



After the prayers the pilgrim has to engage in supplications and prayers. Once the Holy Prophet(sa) said that, the one who does not supplicate at the plain of Arafaat is unlucky. Arafaat is the place where Hadhrat Muhammad(sa) delivered the farewell sermon.

After sunset, the pilgrims have to leave Arafaat and move to Muzdhalifa where they offer their Maghrib and Isha prayers. In the Holy Qur'an this place is referred to as Mash' ar al-Haram. It is a sacred place. The night at Muzdhalifa is very important for the pilgrims; it is the night for prayers and supplications.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

It is no sin for you that you seek the bounty of your Lord. But when you pour forth from Arafaat, remember Allah at Mash' ar al-Haram, and remember Him as He has guided you; although, before this, you were of those gone astray.

(Ch.2: v.199)

During the entire journey, the pilgrim has to recite the Talbiyyah. The plain of Muzdhalifa is also a significant place for pilgrims. Actually, the pilgrim has to spend the whole night praying and asking repentance from their sins and

remembering Allah Almighty. At that place there will be no tent provided so the pilgrim may stay awake all night in prayers. One more important task to be done at Muzdhalifa is to collect stones for Rami (stoning of the devil). The stone should not be too big or too small. The size should be the size of a peanut. Seventy stones should be taken and kept in the pocket. The pilgrim will spend the night at Muzdhalifa and then after fajr prayer would return to Mina. By now it will be the 10th of Dhul Hajj. Here the pilgrim will throw stones at a minaret called Jamratul-Aqbah in remembrance, again, of an act of Ibrahim^(as). It is related that when Ibrahim^(as) was taking his son to be slaughtered, Satan distracted him and he threw stones at him. While throwing the stones the Talbiyyah and other prayers should be repeated several times. It is prescribed to say *Allahu Akbar, Lailah illa ullah, Alhamdulillah*.

On 10th Dhul Hajj, after the initial ceremony of Rami on one Jamra, the pilgrim may perform *Kurbani* (slaughter an animal).

Only such pilgrims offer sacrifice who perform hajj-e-Tamatto or Hajj-e-Qiran. Hajj-e-Tamatto means, that he pilgrim wears Ihram separately for Umra and Hajj, while Hajj-e-Qiran means, that with one Ihram, the pilgrim performs Umra as well as hajj. Both such pilgrims would offer sacrifice in Mina or would fast for 10 days. This is again to repeat the practice of Ibrahim^(as). When he was going to undergo the slaughter of his son Ismael^(as), Allah sent a revelation and said I am pleased with your act, do not slaughter your son, instead slaughter a lamb. A cow or a camel can also be slaughtered, but remember seven persons can share a cow and a camel. If one cannot afford to slaughter an animal, they can keep fast for three days i.e. from the 7th to the 9th Dhul Hajj. After the Qurbani, the male pilgrim has to shave or cut his hair. Female pilgrims trim their hair an inch from the bottom. The shaving of the head is a symbolic gesture of a new birth, like acquiring the innocence of a new born baby.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

And complete the Hajj and the Umrah for the sake of Allah: but if you are kept back, then make whatever offering is easily available; and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches its destination. And whoever among you is sick or has an ailment of head should make expiation either by fasting or almsgiving or a sacrifice. But when you are safe, then he who would avail himself of the Umrah together with the Hajj, should make whatever offering is easily obtainable. But such of you as cannot find an offering should fast three days during the pilgrimage and seven when you return home; these are ten complete. This is for him whose family does not reside near the Sacred Mosque. And fear Allah and know that Allah is severe in punishing.

(Ch.2:v.197)

When on the 10th of dhul-Hijjah, after initial Rami with

seven stone starts, Talbiyya is no longer required.

Muslims around the world who have not gone to the Hajj, will also perform *Qurbani* on the same day.

Now the pilgrim can take off their Ihraam and wear normal clothes and go to Makkah to Masjid al Haram for Tawaaf. During the Tawaaf, the pilgrim should engage in silent prayers and *Takbeer* and *Tasbeeh*. After completing the Tawaaf they go to Mina and stay there for 3 days from 11th to 13th of Dhul Hajj. It is optional to stay there for 2 days. After that all the pilgrims come back to Masjid Haram for the farewell Tawaaf. It is related that the Holy Prophet (sa) was on a camel, named Qaswa, during this farewell Tawaaf. In each circuit he touched the Hajr al Aswad with his walking stick. After completing the seven circuits, he stopped at Muqame Ibrahim, prayed two rakaats and drank from the well of Zum Zum. Then he made the last tour of Masjid Haram and the Ka'aba. Muqame

Ibrahim, the well of Zum Zum and the Ka'aba are all situated within the Masjid Haram compound. The pilgrim should submit to Allah Almighty in prayers and Tasbeeh. This is the time to ask Allah for whatever the pilgrim wants and engage in silent prayers all the time. The ceremony of Hajj is completed.

The pilgrim may go to the other sacred city called Madinah to visit the Masjid al-Nabwi (the Holy Prophet's Mosque^(sa)), and the tomb of the Holy Prophet^(sa). The Holy Prophet's^(sa) Mosque in Madinah is a blessed place as according to one tradition, forty prayers observed here are greatly blessed by God Almighty. This therefore means that the pilgrim should allow himself a stay of at least eight days in Madinah-tul-Munawara. The person who is going for Hajj should have intention of performing his Pilgrimage just for the sake of worship. No other worldly matter should propel them to perform the Hajj. Not even the wish to be called a pious person nor the desire to be called al-Hajj should

induce him to perform Hajj. This is very important, because Allah sees into his heart. His deeds and intentions are the only things considered in front of Allah.

There are three types of Hajj. Hajj Tamatto, Hajj Ifrad and Hajj Qiran. The one I have described above is Hajj Tamatto. The Hajj of Ifrad starts with the intention of Hajj by reciting this Prayer:

*Allahuma innee arfidul hajja,
Fayassirhu lee wa
taqabbalhu minnee*

'O, Allah I have decided to offer Hajj, make it easy for me and accept it.'

When the pilgrims reaches the designated place near Makkah, they put on the Ihraam and recite the Talbiyyah. After that they proceed to Makkah and perform Tawaaf, go for Saiee and remain in Makkah in the state of Ihraam.

On 8th Dhul Hajj the pilgrim goes to Mina, Arafat and Muzdhalifa. Next day on the way back to Makkah, they perform

the ceremony of throwing stones to the devil, sacrificing an animal and shaving of hair. They then travel to Mecca and perform the final Tawaaf.

Hajj Qiran is a type of Hajj in which the pilgrim offers Umrah and Hajj in combination. The pilgrim starts with the intention of Umrah and Hajj by reciting this prayer:

*Allahuma innee arfidul hajja,
Fayassirhu lee wa
taqabbalhu minnee*

‘O, Allah I have decided to perform Hajj and Umrah, Make them easy for me and accept them’.

When the pilgrim reaches the designated place near Makkah, they put on the Ihraam and recite the Talbiyyah. After reaching Makkah, the Pilgrim performs Tawaaf of the Ka’aba, go for Saiee and travel to Mina, Arafat and Muzdhalifa. On the way back to Mecca they perform the ceremony of throwing stones to the devil, sacrificing of an animal

and throwing of the stones, and come back to Makkah for the final Tawaaf. The Holy Prophet^(sa) performed the Qiran Hajj on the occasion of the Hajjatul Widaa.

Umra is the same as Hajj except for two things. First it can be performed at any time of the year and second there is no Qurbani. It is possible during the Hajj to combine it with the Umrah. According to a Hadith, on the 10th of Al-Hijrah the Holy Prophet^(sa) decided to go for Hajj. Many people joined him, among them were rich and poor, most of them were so poor that they travelled to Makkah from Madinah on foot and could not carry animals with them. Thus the Holy Prophet^(sa) passed a statement that from this day he wanted to combine the Hajj with Umrah, for the benefit of those who could not afford to have an animal.

Journey to Truth – Hinduism:

by Abdul Kudus Alimi – Switzerland

Journey to the Truth is a series of articles by the author covering the theme of whether we get the same picture of God and Prophethood from looking at various faiths. He is attempting to compare the view of God from different teachings at different places around the world and from different eras. If all of the teachings show a common theme and common understanding of God, then this adds weight to the belief in One Omnipotent God. The series will look at the major faiths, traditional beliefs and renowned philosophers.

Interpreting Hindu Scriptures

(1) ‘All purposes served by a small well can at once be served by a great reservoir of water. Similarly, all the purposes of the Vedas (Hindu Scriptures) can be served to one who knows the purpose behind them’
(*Bhagavad Gita* 2:46)

In the text above , ‘a small well’ is expressed as having the same capability as a ‘great reservoir of water’. This means that though the layman might regard the Hindu Scriptures as merely a compilation of teachings (i.e. a small well), anyone who truly understands the Hindu Scriptures will regard it as an immense amount of beneficial

knowledge (i.e. a great reservoir of water).

The text above reveals the importance of acquiring wisdom, because most of the teachings in the Hindu Scriptures are not matter-of-fact statements. Thus most of the teachings in the Hindu Scriptures should not be interpreted literally.

(2) ‘Men of small knowledge are very much attached to the flowery words of the Vedas (Hindu Scriptures), which recommend various fruitive activities for elevation to heavenly planets, resultant good birth, power, and so forth. Being desirous of sense gratification and opulent life,

they say that there is nothing more than this.’

(*Bhagavad Gita* 2:42-43)

The text above implies that when the Hindu Scriptures are interpreted literally, without Divine Knowledge, belief is based on weird phenomena. And because people who lack Divine Knowledge are easily attracted to weird phenomena, they decline to accept that the Hindu Scriptures mean much more than their literal expressions.

‘they say that there is nothing more than this’

(*Bhagavad Gita* 2:42-43)

(3) ‘This supreme science (Hindu religious teachings) was thus received through the chain of disciplic succession, and the saintly kings understood it in that way. But in the course of time the succession was broken and therefore the science as it is appears to be lost.’

(*Bhagavad Gita* 4:2).

The text above implies that during each generation, Divine sages

were responsible for the propagation of the correct Hindu religious teachings. Kings who possessed Divine Guidance aided the propagation. This process continued for some time. Unfortunately, somewhere along the line, the Divine sages ceased to appear, and thus this ended the propagation of correct Hindu religious teachings (i.e. thus the Scriptures began to be taken literally or misinterpreted).

Bhagavad Gita

The *Bhagavad Gita* is one of the Books of the Hindu Scriptures. It is believed to have been a discourse between Krishna^(as) and his cousin called Arjuna.

Is Krishna^(as) The Supreme Being?

The Brahmanical religion generally identified today as ‘Hinduism’, is believed to be associated with the teachings of Krishna^(as). Today, followers of this religion believe that Krishna^(as) is the Supreme Being, but there is reason to believe that Krishna^(as) was a chosen devotee of the Supreme Being and not the Supreme Being.

The Bhagavad Gita reveals that those who wholeheartedly devote their lives to the Supreme Being, over a period of time, consequently attain a high Spiritual status called ‘Divine Consciousness’, during which the Supersoul or the Supreme Being manifests within them, and guides all their deeds and sayings, and even occasionally speaks directly through them. Thus there is reason to believe that the words of the Bhagavad Gita, are not the words of Krishna^(as), but they are the words of the Supreme Being revealed through Krishna^(as), after Krishna^(as) attained Divine Consciousness.

‘Unintelligent men who do not know Me perfectly, think that I, the Supreme Being, was impersonal before and have now assumed this personality. Due to their small knowledge, they do not know My Higher nature, which is Imperishable and Supreme.’
(*Bhagavad Gita* 7:24).

The Supersoul (The Supreme Being)

‘He is Knowledge, He is the

object of Knowledge, and He is the goal of Knowledge. He is situated in everyone’s heart.’
(*Bhagavad Gita*, 13:18)

‘Yet, in this body there is another, a transcendental enjoyer, who is the Lord, the Supreme proprietor, who exists as the overseer and permitter, and who is known as the Supersoul.’
(*Bhagavad Gita*, 13:23)

The Scriptures reveal that the Supreme Being exists within everyone as the Supersoul. But in order for the Supreme Being within one to manifest itself (and guide all of one’s actions and sayings), one has to attain Divine Consciousness.

Divine Consciousness

‘Some perceive the Supersoul within themselves through meditation, others through the cultivation of Knowledge, and still others through working without fruitive desires. Again there are those who, although not conversant in Spiritual Knowledge, begin to worship the Supreme Being upon

hearing about Him from others. Because of their tendency to hear from authorities, they also transcend the path of birth and death.’
(*Bhagavad Gita*, 13:25-26)

Therefore, Divine Consciousness may be attained as a result of,

(1) faithful wholehearted meditation; ‘*Some perceive the Supersoul within themselves through meditation*’. Constant wholehearted meditation implies being aware of the Supreme Being at all times. Because when a person faithfully has the Supreme Being in his mind always, his conscience will always remind him to obey the Teachings of the Supreme Being. He will eventually become a recipient of Divine Consciousness.

(2) faithfully seeking Spiritual Knowledge; ‘*others through the cultivation of Knowledge*’. When a person wholeheartedly seeks after spiritual knowledge, he is bound to gain a correct understanding of the Teachings of the Supreme Being. As he acquires the correct understanding of the Teachings of the Supreme Being, his conduct

would be governed by his understanding. Thus he will always remember to obey the Teachings of the Supreme Being, and he will eventually become a recipient of Divine Consciousness.

(3) faithfully resisting worldly temptations; ‘*and still others through working without fruitive desires*.’ When a person constantly resists worldly temptations and strives wholeheartedly towards sinlessness and perfection over a period of time, the Supreme Being is pleased with him and rewards him with Divine Consciousness. The Supreme Being relieves him of all the hardwork of having striven so hard. The Supreme Being rewards him by manifesting within him, and guiding all his future intentions, speech and actions.

‘They are flawless like the Supreme Being, and thus they are already situated in the Supreme Being.’

(*Bhagavad Gita*, 5:19)

(4) developing a sincerely open mind; ‘Again there are those who, although not conversant in Spiritual Knowledge, begin to

worship the Supreme Being upon hearing about Him from others. Because of their tendency to hear from (genuine) authorities, they also transcend the path of birth and death.

If a person approaches every teaching with a sincerely open mind, he is bound to find the correct Teachings of the Supreme Being. But if one's mind is biased against other teachings, one would ignorantly dismiss the correct Teachings of the Supreme Being whenever it comes one's way.

Warning against worshipping men

The Hindu Scriptures warn against worshipping a person (who attains Divine Consciousness) as the Supreme Being.

‘Unintelligent men who do not know Me perfectly, think that I, the Supreme Being, was impersonal before and have now assumed this personality. Due to their small knowledge, they do not know My Higher nature, which is Imperishable and Supreme.’

(Bhagavad Gita 7:24)

The words above, are the direct words of the Supreme Being revealed through Krishna^(as), after Krishna^(as) had attained Divine Consciousness. These are obviously not the words of Krishna^(as). But they are the words of the Supreme Being or Supersoul, Who manifested within Krishna^(as) once he attained Divine Consciousness, guiding all Krishna's actions and sayings, and occasionally speaking directly through Krishna^(as).

On attaining Divine Consciousness, a person does not become the Supreme Being, but is rather guided by the Supreme Being. The Supreme Being is not human, and thus does not possess physical forms like a human being.

‘He does not possess bodily form like that of an ordinary entity’

(*Svetasvatara Upanisad*, 6:8)

Like many other texts in the Bhagavad Gita, the words of the Bhagavad Gita presented below are not the words of Krishna^(as). They are the words of the Supreme Being revealed through Krishna^(as),

after Krishna^(as) attained Divine Consciousness.

‘Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, O descendant of Bharata (O Arjuna), and a predominant rise in irreligion – at that time I manifest Myself’
(*Bhagavad Gita*, 4:7)

The text implies that during every period of religious ignorance, the Supreme Being would be manifested within His sincere devotee, and this devotee would serve as a means by which the true teachings of the Supreme Being would be re-established on earth.

The actions and speech of a person who attains Divine Consciousness become ideal moral behaviour because he is constantly guided by the Supreme Being. Thus he is potentially capable of directing others in the right way.

‘and (the Supreme Being) is the Supreme Director of all (genuine) directors’.
(*Svetasvatara Upanisad*, 6:7)

Divine Consciousness

Among several other descriptions, Divine Consciousness has been described as:

i) a state of PEACE

‘A person who has given up all desires for sense gratification, who lives free from desires, who has given up all sense of proprietorship and is devoid of false ego -he alone can attain real peace.’

(*Bhagavad Gita*, 2:71)

‘And how can there be any happiness without peace?’

(*Bhagavad Gita*, 2:66)

ii) The MERCY of the Supreme Being

‘But a person free from all attachment and aversion and able to control his senses through regulative principles of freedom can obtain the complete Mercy of the Lord.’

(*Bhagavad Gita*, 2:64)

‘To show them My Special Mercy, I dwelling in their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp of Knowledge the

darkness born of ignorance.’
(*Bhagavad Gita*, 10: 11)

iii) a sense of 'happiness' and 'KNOWLEDGE'

‘O sinless one, the mode of goodness, being purer than others, is illuminating, and it frees one from all sinful reactions. Those situated in that mode become conditioned by a sense of happiness and Knowledge.’

(*Bhagavad Gita*, 14:6)

‘Before giving up this present body, if one is able to tolerate the urges of the material senses and check the force of desire and anger, he is well situated and is happy in this world.’

(*Bhagavad Gita*, 5:23)

Qualities And Attributes Of The Supreme Being

Certain ‘godlike figures’ are metaphorically portrayed in the Hindu Scriptures. They are not portrayed as having absolute powers but are rather designated with specific powers. Each ‘figure’ is depicted as having a specific power of its own. Below are some examples:

- **Agni** - god of fire.
- **Brahma** - god of creation.
- **Indra** - god of the heavens.
- **Kandarpa** - god of love.
- **Kuvera** - god of wealth.
- **Manu** - god and father of mankind.
- **Marici** - god of the winds
- **Siva** - god of war (i.e. Truth defeating Falsehood, or Re-establishment of True Teachings in a period of ignorance).
- **Varuna** - god of water.
- **Yama** - god of death or punishment (i.e. punishing sinners after death).

The *Bhagavad Gita* explains that these ‘godlike figures’ do not exist as separate beings, but are rather the different qualities or attributes of the Supreme Being. It is wrong to worship them as separate beings.

‘Those who are devotees of other gods and who worship them with faith actually worship only Me, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), but they do so in a wrong way.’

(*Bhagavad Gita*, 9:23)

The verse also warns against the worship of past prophets as deities.

When referring to death or punishing sinners after death, the Supreme Being often identifies Himself as ‘Yama’. When referring to war (‘Truth’ defeating ‘Falsehood’ or the re-establishment of True Teachings in a period of Ignorance), the Supreme Being often identifies Himself as ‘Siva’. And when creation is mentioned, He often identifies Himself as ‘Brahma’.

‘His potencies are multifarious’ (*Svetasvatara Upanisad*, 6:8)

The One And Only Supreme Being

The Supreme Being is described in Vedic literature (Hindu Scriptures) in the following terms;

‘The Supreme Lord is the Controller of all controllers, and He is the Greatest of all the diverse planetary leaders. Everyone is under His control. All entities are delegated with particular power only by the Supreme Lord; they are not

supreme themselves. He is also worshipable by all demigods and is the supreme Director of all directors. Therefore, He is transcendental to all kinds of material leaders and controllers and is worshipable by all. There is no one greater than Him, and He is the supreme cause of all causes.

He does not possess bodily form like that of an ordinary entity. There is no difference between His body and His soul. He is absolute. All his senses are transcendental. Any one of His senses can perform the action of any other sense. Therefore no one is greater than Him or equal to Him. His potencies are multifarious, and thus his deeds are automatically performed as a natural sequence.’

(*Svetasvatara Upanisad*, 6:7-8)

Hindu Scriptures reveal that the Supreme Being is One being. The issue of His Unity has again been clarified. The Bhagavad Gita also confirms this view as can be seen below:

‘Others, who engage in sacrifice by the cultivation of Knowledge, worship the Supreme Lord as the One without a second, as diverse in many, and in universal form.’
(*Bhagavad Gita*, 9:15)

‘Although the Supersoul appears to be divided among all beings, He is never divided. He is situated as One. Although He is the maintainer of every living entity, it is to be understood that He devours and develops all.’
(*Bhagavad Gita*, 13:17)

Krishna^(as)

It is difficult to obtain complete and accurate information regarding the life of Krishna^(as). Hindu religious teachings were passed verbally from generation to generation for many hundred years after Krishna^(as). And after this period, the Bhagavad-Gita and Upanisad, were also written over hundreds of years.

Krishna^(as) is believed to have been born over 3000 years ago to Devaki (his mother) and Vasudeva (his father). When Krishna^(as) was born, he was given the name

‘Kinhai’. It was only on attaining Divine Consciousness that his name was changed to Krishna^(as). Krishna^(as) belonged to a royal family. His mother was a sister of King Kamsa and also a sister of the wife of a King in the Kuru dynasty called Pandu. King Pandu's wife was called Kunti or Prtha, the mother of the Pandavas. Arjuna, Krishna's cousin was one of the sons of Pandu.

Most information regarding the life of Krishna^(as) do not appear as matter-of-fact statements. However, a few aspects of his life that have been metaphorically expressed are discussed here.

Krishna-Bhagavan

Krishna^(as) is also revered as ‘Bhagavan’ which literally means ‘powerful-person’. This term apparently signifies to Krishna's Spiritual Capabilities after he attained Divine Consciousness. It should not be interpreted literally as physical power. These spiritual capabilities have been metaphorically expressed as physical events such as battles against Beasts and Demons. Such battles signify to ‘Truth’, triumphing over

‘Falsehood’. In other words, the re-establishment of the correct teachings of the Supreme Being during a period of ignorance.

Multi-Armed Krishna

Krishna^(as) is portrayed in the Scriptures as having more than the normal two physical arms. This is also an indication of his Spiritual capabilities. It implies that on attaining Divine Consciousness, the Supreme Being began to guide his actions. Metaphorically, the added arms are the arms of the Supreme Being Who began to assist Krishna^(as) when he attained Divine Consciousness. It is metaphorically expressed as added physical arms because with added arms, there is an increase in one’s capability. Thus it should not be interpreted literally as physical arms.

Another example of a metaphoric expression of an increase in capability could be observed in the Scriptures with regard to the possession of wings. It should not be interpreted literally as physical wings.

Krishna The Flute-Player

Krishna^(as) is also portrayed as a flute-player. This describes an attribute of the Supreme Being that Krishna^(as) began to reflect once he attained Divine Consciousness. A flute-player uses his flute as a medium of conveying his musical expressions to others. Similarly, the Supreme Being uses His chosen devotee (Krishna^(as)) as a means of conveying His teachings to mankind. In other words, Krishna^(as) is to the Supreme Being, what the flute is to the flute-player.

Krishna Dances With The Gopis

A very common way of expressing love for a particular musical expression is by dancing. Similarly, an appropriate way of expressing one’s love for a conveyed teaching, is by adhering to the principles of that teaching.

Therefore, dancing to the sound of the musical instrument can be interpreted as adhering to the teachings of the Supreme Being conveyed through His chosen devotee.

‘Gopi’ is a Sanskrit term which means ‘milk-maid’. It should be noted here that India, Krishna’s birth-place, is a country with cows, cowherds and milkmaids, and not shepherds and sheep.

The Gopis Expose Their Nakedness To Krishna

Exposing ones’ nakedness to Krishna^(as) is not a matter-of-fact statement. It rather means, ‘confessing ones’ sins to Krishna^(as) with the hope of obtaining forgiveness from the Supreme Being.

Krishna’s birth had been foretold long before he was born. Most of the story of his birth has been expressed metaphorically. The fact that Krishna's birth had been foretold shows that long before Krishna^(as) was born, there had been a person like Krishna^(as) who had also attained Divine Consciousness, and had been responsible for the establishment of the correct teachings of the Supreme Being during the previous period of Ignorance. This person had foretold his birth which had been expected to take place during the next period of Ignorance.

Like his predecessor, Krishna^(as) also foretold the coming of another person who would attain Divine Consciousness like him, and would be responsible for establishing the correct teachings of the Supreme Being in the next period of Ignorance as part of a cycle.

You are most welcome to submit articles to The Review of Religions (prefably in electronic format). All we request is that it should be unpublished and well-researched with full cross-reference to original source material. Please include your full name, address, a telephone number and an a brief introduction about yourself. We reserve the right to make minor amendments and delete matter without prior reference to the author or reject publication. Every effort is made to acknowledge receipt of manuscripts.

The Impact of Alcohol on Society

by Dr. Latif A Qureshi – Edinburgh

The effects of alcohol are being witnessed more and more on the streets of the developed world through anti-social behaviour and poor health. The United Kingdom is starting to count the costs of the effects of this drug upon its society.

Given that Islam banned alcoholic beverages some 1400 years ago, the author takes a broader look at the effects of alcohol and alcoholism upon society, and whether there are lessons to be learned from the Islamic stance.

Alcohol (ethanol) is widely used in the world as a beverage. It has well known potent pharmacological effects, some of which can be easily observed even by a person not medically trained. It has important effects on the brain, heart, liver, stomach, lungs, peripheral nerves, blood and blood vessels. In fact there is hardly any organ in the body that may not be affected by it to a greater or lesser degree. The action on the brain is especially noteworthy. Alcohol depresses its functions. This initially causes a loss of inhibition and a feeling of pleasure but progresses on to drowsiness, sleep, loss of consciousness and even death

with the increasing levels of alcohol in the blood. Ethyl alcohol has few medicinal uses when given systemically, but is of great medical importance because of its damaging physical and psychological effects when used as a beverage.

It is estimated that about 5% of the adult population in Western Europe and North America may have alcohol dependence. The impact of the consumption of alcohol on human society can be visualised by two examples: one old and the other in the modern world as outlined below.

The Present Day Scenario:

On the 19th September 2003 in Britain, the British Prime Minister's Strategy Unit on alcohol harm reduction produced an interim report on the situation as it exists in the United Kingdom. It points out that 40% of men's drinking sessions now technically qualify as binge drinking. It is responsible for a range of alcohol-related problems. It is linked to up to 22,000 premature deaths each year and is costing the country up to £20 billion a year.

An increasing number of young persons, some below the age of 16 years are drinking well above the safe limits. Up to 1.3 million children in the UK are affected by parental alcohol problems. This is bringing with it health risks and a range of other social problems. Not least of these problems is the nuisance and disorder that is all too often a feature of the UK town and city centres (especially in the evenings or weekends).

Pre Islamic Arab Civilisation:

About fourteen centuries ago, the Arabian Peninsula was inhabited by a race that was removed from the civilisation of the time because of the terrain and desert of its land. Hence they lived a free, fierce and nomadic life style. They were illiterate and barbarian and worshipped many gods and idols. They had no moral values.

They gambled and had fun of all sorts in their carnivals and feasts. Drinking alcohol was an important part of their daily routine. Their binge drinking habits were well established and are documented in history. This led to many fights among the drinking factions, sometimes leading to wars and loss of life between different tribes. Alcohol consumption played a pivotal role in their social life.

It is stated that Arabs started drinking in the mornings and had some more around lunchtime as a top up. They then rested for a while during the midday heat and had another top up drink before

sunset. Further drinking continued after sunset and during the night. It appears that they must have remained continually intoxicated and this would have led to a lot of ill health and disease.

The Qur'anic Teachings:

More than fourteen centuries ago the Qur'an, the Muslim scripture, was revealed to Prophet Muhammad^(sa) in Arabia over a period of twenty-three years. He lived in Makkah during the first thirteen of these years of his ministry and in Madinah during the last ten years. The Islamic teachings were, therefore, revealed bit by bit over this period of time.

The Qur'an contains detailed guidance not only about spiritual matters relating to human life but also regarding physical and moral values. The guidance regarding the consumption of alcohol is contained in two different verses of the Qur'an both of which were revealed after the Prophet's migration to Madinah and are quoted as

follows:

They ask thee concerning wine and the game of hazard. Say: 'In both there is great sin and also some advantages for men; but their sin is greater than their advantage.'

(Ch.2: v.220)

O ye who believe! Intoxicants and the games of chance and idols and divining arrows are only an abomination of Satan's handiwork. So shun each one of them that you may prosper.

(Ch.5: v.91)

The Revolution:

The Arab Muslims were part of the same society and before these verses were revealed consumed alcohol like their other non-believing counterparts. It is stated that when this message about inhibition was conveyed, a drinking party was in progress in a street of Madinah. On hearing the news, the companions of the Holy Prophet^(sa) immediately destroyed all of the liquor even before confirming the reported

prohibition and stopped drinking and became teetotalless from then on.

All practising Muslims henceforth consider the drinking of alcohol a sin. All the areas of the world where such people live are dry areas and thirst for liquid refreshment is heightened. This indeed is an amazing revolution.

Discussion:

If we ponder carefully on these events, we can get to the bottom of this change. Alcohol is a habit-forming drug that causes dependence and its withdrawal may be associated with dangerous side effects. So the question is what brought about this sudden change in the Muslim society.

It appears that the strong moral qualities, firm determination and a strong faith in the truth of the Qur'anic message brought about this change very abruptly in the first place and continues now to this day among those who follow these teachings. There are a lot of benefits that follow as a result.

Conclusion:

Is there a lesson to be learnt from this example? Is there a message that can be conveyed to the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit and to the public at large in the UK and further afield?

This is worth a thought especially at a time when the festive season around Christmas and the New Year, well known for alcohol abuse, has just had its latest chapter.

Bibliography:

1. *A Textbook of Clinical Pharmacology*. Ritter J.M., Lewis L.D. & Mant T.G.K. 3rd Edition 1995. Arnold.
2. *Pharmacology*. Rang H.P., Dale M.M., Ritter J.M. & Moore P.K.. 5th Edition 2003. Churchill Livingstone.
3. *The Holy Qur'an*, English Translation by Maulawi Sher Ali. 1997 Islam International Publications Ltd.
4. http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/news/2003/030919_alcoholsu.asp

Subscription

The Review of Religions

If you would like to order a copy of any issue published in 2003, please send £1.50 (or equivalent) providing us with your full name and address. Delivery will be on a first come, first served basis, and in the absence of a copy being available your money will be returned

-
- Are you a subscriber to *The Review of Religions*?
 - Have you renewed your subscription for the next year?

Why not sponsor a reader to *The Review of Religions* by subscribing for him/her and we will send the first edition on your behalf with your compliments

We hope you have enjoyed reading this edition of the magazine. *The Review of Religions* will continue to provide discussion on a wide range of subjects and welcomes any comments or suggestions from its readers.

To ensure that you regularly receive this monthly publication, please fill in your details below and we will put you on our mailing list.

The cost of one year's subscription is £15 Sterling or US \$30 for overseas readers (Please do not send cash). **Payments by US residents should be by check payable to "AMP" (US dollars 30) and sent direct to 'The Review of Religions', Baitul Zafar, 86-71 PALO ALTO ST, HOLLISWOOD, NY 11423-1203 (USA).** All other subscription payments should be made payable to the London Mosque and sent to the address below:

The Review of Religions
The London Mosque
16 Gressenhall Road
London SW18 5QL
United Kingdom



Please tick in box if
you wish to receive
The Review of Religions
2003 CD

Please put me on the mailing list for the Review of Religions for 1 year. I enclose subscription payment of £15.00 or US \$30.00 (please see instructions above residents). OR if you wish to receive a CD of all the articles published in 2003, please tick the white box above and enclose payment of £5.00, please also add an appropriate sum for postage.

Name: _____

Address: _____
