

Good News

And give good news to those who do good (to others)

-Holy Quran 22:37

July 2020 Volume 11 No. 07

Seeking the Divine Within

Eid ul Adha Message July 2020

- Ebrahim Mohamed

Cape Town, South Africa

In the name of God the Beneficent,
the Merciful

‘The months of pilgrimage (*Hajj*) are well known, so whoever determines to perform pilgrimage therein there shall be no immodest speech, nor abusing, no altercation in the pilgrimage. And whatever good you do, Allah knows it. And make provision for yourselves, the best provision being to keep one’s duty. And keep your duty to Me, O men of understanding.’ – 2:197

Eid ul Adha means the *Day of Sacrifices* which Muslims across the world celebrate in commemoration of the sacrifices made by that illustrious Patriarch of many nations, the Prophet Abraham, his son the Prophet Ishmael and his wife Hagar in laying the foundation of Islam. Islam means ‘*Peace* that comes through complete submission to the Will of Almighty God.’

The day of Eid comes at the end of the *Hajj* (Pilgrimage), the fifth pillar of the Islamic Faith. *Hajj* is that occasion in the Muslim calendar when Muslim pilgrims gather in Makka to celebrate collectively the unity of God and the unity of humankind in an atmosphere of *spiritual* singularity of minds and souls. It is symbolically a sacrificial pilgrimage

dedicated to the unfoldment of the soul and is not a mere sight-seeing tour for the pleasures of the body. Rather, it is a sacrifice of man's bestial nature and in so doing elevate his mind, heart and soul and set him on a course towards Almighty God, the Lord of all the worlds. Except God does not take up a physical position so he cannot journey to Him in that way; no by this we mean awakening the Divine spirit that God breathed into all of us. After mentioning the creation of man, Almighty God says:

‘Then He made him complete *and breathed into him of His spirit.*’ - (32:9)

Thus this universal action of the believers called the *Hajj* provides the time and space for us to embrace our common humanity, our common spiritual ideals, our common yearnings and goals to find peace with Almighty God and His creation, in essence, to find peace within ourselves. *Hajj* is that pillar of Islam which is symbolic of the fact that, despite all our weaknesses

and shortcomings, we are naturally social beings that cannot live in isolation apart and away from each other. Intrinsicly our natures lean towards finding pleasure in our interactions with others more so than the negative tendencies of disinterest in the wellbeing of others that so often raises its ugly head when man loses control of his lower self. Nevertheless, we have been endowed with a soul, which means we have emotions. We have empathy, sympathy, love, kindness, humanity and, much more, embedded in us even in those who have no faith in a Supreme Being.

However, when we allow the dark tendencies to dominate the good in us, the Good Lord allows something terrible to happen that jolts our conscience and revitalizes the true nature of our souls once again. This is known as the *nafs al lawama* –‘the self –accusing spirit’ or simply put *our conscience*.

Thus, it is but natural for us to respond with urgency when disaster strikes and seek out ways of caring

and sharing goodwill with fellow humankind when there is a desperate need to do so. We have seen this side of man surface with this pandemic. Many sacrifices have been made and are still being made by ordinary mortals to save the lives of fellow mortals. We take our hats off to those hospital staff, the doctors, nurses, cleaners and all other service providers that risk their own safety on a daily basis to save a life. We support all those who provide support to the suffering in the townships. We acknowledge those who are taking all safety precautions by sacrificing social gatherings, wearing masks in public, resorting to regular sanitizing etc. to curb the spread of the virus, for the safety not only of their own families but in the broader interest of our communities at large.

For these safety and unselfish reasons even the *Hajj* this year has been limited to only a few pilgrims from within Saudi Arabia and no one from outside the country. This is indeed sad but, then, if we consider

that the great lesson which this noble assembly of worshippers from across the world usually project, that no man-made *workshop* on earth can match, lies in the moral teaching that no one should be discriminated against on the basis of their race, colour, nationality, creed, social status, spiritual status or religious differences etc., then I cannot help asking ‘Is there a special message from above for Muslims in this year’s *Hajj*? Are we being told, that, because we have, for many successive generations, failed to carry out these moral lessons of the *Hajj*, we will now be disciplined, and like the truant child ordered into isolation to the dreaded corner of humiliation and shame, until we repent our ways and humble ourselves before our Lord? And this goes for all mankind, for, amidst all the confusion and lack of any rational guidance from leadership across all sectors of society, this seems to be the only logical conclusion man, groping for answers, can come to. If humankind

have not yet seen the heavenly signs in all of this, it is now time to wake up, or, like Moses' Pharaoh, face another wave of trials. God forbid this does not happen!

For those who have observed the heavenly signs, we ask: 'was it really necessary for a destructive invisible virus to awaken our faltering conscience to enforce a change of hearts?' Were the words of the good Lord that He blessed us with through His noble prophets not sufficient to bring out the best in us? Were we not taught by way of examples the love for good and hatred for evil? Through this heavenly trial, we earnestly pray that man's natural humanity; his innate feelings of love, empathy and justice for all that have been buried under overgrown weeds of arrogance, inflated egos and hardheartedness, for too long now, will be re-awakened and flourish once more. And still we find, instead of bowing heads in submission and in solemn contemplation and reflection on the Almighty and His universal laws,

many are still aimlessly wandering on in the unethical pursuit of the 'flesh pots of Egypt' and in the persistent indulgence in all kinds of immorality to please *the beast* within.

Thus, it is of utmost importance that the Muslim pilgrims pay more attention to the *spiritual* provisions required by God Almighty as pointed out in the verse of the Holy Quran above:

'And make provision for yourselves, the best provision being to keep one's duty (*i.e. to guard against doing evil*). And keep your duty to Me, O men of understanding.' -2:197

The same message is highlighted in the verses dealing with the true essence of the animal sacrifice:

'Then when they fall down on their sides, eat of them and feed the contented one and the beggar.' – 22:36

‘Neither their flesh, nor their blood reaches Allah, but to Him is acceptable *observance of duty on your part.*’ -22:37

The meat is meant for the poor and the contented ones, the homeless, the vagrants and so forth. It is not meant for God. The rich and wealthy should use the occasion to ensure mass distribution of the meat among the poorest of the poor of all people not just Muslims. I believe this is already taking place in several communities here and abroad. It is such good deeds of kindness, of goodwill, of sharing that fall under the umbrella of *at taqwa* ‘**observing one’s duty**’ mentioned in several places in the Holy Quran that is important to Almighty God. Muslims, thus, should not take the injunction ‘observance of duty’ lightly. The meaning is sort of twofold. First, it means sacrificing *our own animal self*, described in the Holy Quran as *nafs al amara* that so that the good qualities within us may rise to the fore and grow. It

is about developing in us the moral qualities of virtuousness, which comes by diligently guarding against all forms of evil. It is about deflating the ego that houses, the uncontrolled passions and desires that create havoc in the world. Second, is to make use of such moral qualities in the way of God, which means it must be used to serve humanity as pointed out above. So it is not merely enough to say that you have performed the *Hajj* and think that it all ends there and that that alone is what will please Almighty God. No! God neither stands in need of our *Hajj*, nor our prayers nor our fasts; nor our animal offerings. We need it. It is about what the *Hajj*, our prayers, our fasts, our ritual sacrifices have done for us as a person, as a society, as a nation. It is about what lessons we have learnt from it; whether it has transformed us for the better; about what benefits we will be able to share with our loved ones and the rest of humanity at large. It is about sacrifices in the way of justice and righteousness.

It is NOT about being silent and non-committal in the presence of oppressors and in the face of injustices. It is about making our voices of protestation heard in support of those who are unjustly persecuted no matter who they might be. It is NOT to return once more to a state of complacency with even more selfish attachment to worldly things. If the experiences of the *Hajj* were not able to bring about a moral change for the better then the objective of the pilgrimage was not met and would have been a mere waste of time and money.

Perhaps this is what Almighty God is trying to tell us this year in the midst of this pandemic and that is that we should return to the path of the *spiritual wayfarer* for that is the true and real pilgrimage that starts here inside our own *Ka'bah*¹, that is, in our hearts. We cannot help thinking that the pandemic is perhaps the way Almighty God is

telling us to get rid of the idols that pervade our minds, bodies and souls; idols that come in the form of malice, hatred, suspicions, superstitions, arrogance, pompous pride, foul speeches and altercations, backbiting, envy, jealousy, lies, corruption; blind loyalty to heads of state, politicians, judges, clerics, mullas, muftis, pop stars, sportsmen and women and let us not forget man's misplaced attachment to his wealth, children, gadgets; nay anything and anyone that attract more attention, admiration, and loyalty than the Almighty, Lord of the Universe; Nay! All forms of evil that we have allowed to become fairseeming as if part of a normal, civilized society.

Indeed it is time to become humble and 'observant of Divine duty' again for this alone is the path to salvation that the '*spiritual*' wayfarer treads. This is the real ongoing *Hajj*; and this year, by not being able to make the physical journey to Makka, by Divine Design, this message from above,

¹ The first House of worship of God on earth situated in Makka that symbolizes the Unity of God, that was purified of all idols by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him) and which pilgrims circumambulate during the *Hajj*.

comes through boldly and clearly. This is what Almighty God have been trying to tell us all these generations since the time of the prophet Abraham all the way through all the prophets that came after him up to the final prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and all his righteous followers - but we did not listen; perhaps we will listen now!

Although the physical journey to Makka is merely symbolic of the performance and observance of our duty to God as a global society it nevertheless teaches us to strive to live in peace and harmony with fellow humankind. The Holy Quran contains such comprehensive guidance that covers our personal and social lives. It outlines our duties as *individuals*, as *husbands*, as *wives*, as *parents*, as *children*, as *neighbours*, as *brothers*, as *sisters*, as *relatives*, as *scholars*, as *rulers of nations*, etc. To constantly strive, with sincerity, to find out what these duties are and then to try as best to implement it and live by it in whatever capacity we might find

ourselves in, are what our faith in God and in His Messenger, entails. **Hajj** which is embedded in the unity of God and the unity of man is a practical demonstration of the recipe for peace on earth.

May Almighty God help us to **fulfil our duties to Him and all of mankind** in a way that pleases Him.

We wish all our Muslim brothers and sisters, a joyous and blessed Eid.



The Good News

Editor : Ebrahim Mohamed

Contact Details: P.O. Box 13744

Goodwood, Cape Town, South Africa 7463

Email: emuhamed@mweb.co.za

Publications: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at

Islam Lahore (South Africa)

Reg. P.B.O. 930050262