

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

We read in the Holy Quran “They ask thee about the New Moons Say: They are but signs to mark fixed periods of time in (the affairs of) men and for Pilgrimage.” (2:189)

“The number of months in the sight of Allah Is twelve (in a year)So ordained by Him The day He created The heavens and the earth; Of them four are sacred; That is the straight usage So wrong not yourselves therein, and fight the Pagans.” (9: 36)

As you might all be aware a new Islamic Year will start as from Wednesday or Thursday next. In fact the new moon for the new month of Muharram 1437 AH will be born at around 00:05 UTC on 13 October 2015. In some places it will be visible on Tuesday night. But on Wednesday 14th it will be visible around the world. I take this opportunity to wish and hope and pray that this year will bring in its wake plenty of blessings for all Muslims around the world. We hope and pray that Allah will help all Muslim leaders to understand that they have to put their differences aside and work together in the interest of all Muslims without distinction of race, color or sex. In addition Muslim Leaders have to learn to work together despite their differences. We have to acknowledge that since the time of the caliphs differences have started to creep in the Muslim Umma and they have not yet been resolved. Anyhow despite all the differences and strife that exist we believe firmly that Allah can unite the hearts of all Muslims together if He so wishes. Did not He say to the Holy Prophet (saw) “ *Wa allafa bayna qoloubehim law anfaqta maa fil arze jami'an maa allafta bayna qoloubehim wa lakin nallaha allafa baynahoum Innahou azizoune hakeem* ” which is translated as “And He **has** put affection between **their hearts**. If you had expended all that is in the earth, thou could not have put affection between **their hearts**, but **Allah has** put affection between them. Surely, He is Mighty, Wise.”(8:64) So should Allah will it the whole Muslim Umma can become one. So we need to pray for this to happen. We do what we can and we leave the rest to Allah while at the same time we acknowledge our own limits. Anyhow I think that this is a noble objective for which we should pray at the beginning of this New Year.

For the sake of the young ones I will now say a few words about the Islamic Calendar. Unfortunately our children are not taught about the Islamic Calendar. It is part of our

cultural heritage as Muslims. One Muslim writer in India lamenting the fact that the Islamic calendar was no longer being put to use after the colonization by the English had this to say while he was speaking about the advent of the 15th Century of Islamic History:

“It (the advent of the 15th century) is indeed, a unique occasion to ponder that the Islamic Era did not start with the victories of Islamic wars, nor with the birth or death of the prophet (PBUH), nor with the Revelation itself. It starts with Hijra, or the sacrifice for the cause of Truth and for the preservation of the Revelation. It was a divinely inspired selection. God wanted to teach man that struggle between Truth and Evil is eternal. The Islamic year reminds Muslims every year not of the pomp and glory of Islam but of its sacrifice and prepares them to do the same.”

One may agree or disagree with him but nonetheless the point is worth meditating upon. Now we may ask how this choice for an Islamic calendar came about. To understand this we need to go back to the times of Hazrat Umar (ra), the second caliph of Islam. Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique (ra) served as caliph for only two years and he was succeeded by Hazrat Umar (ra). So we understand that Hazrat Umar was caliph from the year 634 to 644. During that time Islam had spread beyond Arabia which at that time was equivalent to the land mass of Saudi Arabia of today. In fact from 634 to 642 many other places like Damascus followed by the whole of Syria, Jerusalem and eventually Egypt would become Muslim Provinces and they were being ruled under the guidance of the caliph Umar (ra). He had to correspond with the governors of these provinces and he wrote letters to them. One of the governors wrote back to him and said “you are sending us undated letters” and it created confusion. So a better system had to be devised. But at that time almost each of these newly conquered places had their own calendars and Hazrat Umar sought the advice of the companions and it was agreed in the year 638 that they would have an Islamic calendar and they chose the migration to Medina to be the start of the new calendar. However the migration occurred in September 622 and it was in the month of Rabi ul awwal, that is the third month of the calendar that the Arabs have been using in their own ways. So after calculation it was established that the start of the first Islamic year would be July 622, at the start of Muharram. The exact date has now been established as 16th July 622. This was Year 1 of the Islamic calendar and next week we will be entering year 1437. Concerning the names of the months of the Islamic calendar they are as follows: **(1) MuHarram; (2) Safar; (3) Raby` al-awal; (4) Raby` al-THaany; (5) Jumaada al-awal; (6) Jumaada al-THaany; (7) Rajab; (8) SHa`baan; (9) RamaDHaan; (10)**

Shawwal; (11) Thw al-Qi`dah; and (12) Thw al-Hijjah. Concerning the solar calendar that is used in European countries we know that they had to make some adjustments along the way but we will leave that.

We will now turn to something more down to earth but very important to us as Ahmadi-Muslims. We will never tire saying that a Muslim should always speak the truth and he should always speak the right word. How many times caliphs have spoken about the following verse of the Holy Quran “*Yaa ayyohallazina aamanou qoulou qawlan sadida youslehlakoum aamaalakoum wa yaghfirlakoum zonoubakoum*” which we translate as “O ye who believe speak always the straightforward word. He will set right your actions and forgive you your sins. And whoso obeys Allah and His Messenger shall surely attain a supreme triumph” (33:71-2). In the verse the word “*Sadid*” has been translated as straight forward. It also means to the point, that which is just, that which aims at reparation, that which is enough, that which is well directed, that which is pertinent, that which is judicious. This verse is usually read on occasion of *Nikas* so that couples might remember them and understand that by saying their *sadid* words, the husband and wife will get a better chance of living in peace. But this verse is above all addressed to all Muslims and hence in all circumstances of life we should learn to speak the “*sadid*” word in order to promote peace in society and people can get on well with one another. When I was young I remember reading that Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique (ra) used to put two pebbles in his mouth so that he might not speak unnecessary words. Similarly I recall that there is a hadith which is as follows: “Whoever believes in Allah and the last day should speak a good word or remain silent...” This is part of a hadith. In this hadith we understand that we should be ever inclined to say the good word. But silence is better if we do not have something good to say. We should develop in ourselves the habit of saying a good word to others whenever we can and refrain from saying anything if whatever we say is bad. From another hadith we learn that Mu`âdh b. Jabal asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) to inform him of some good work that would admit him into Paradise and distance him from the Hellfire. The Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned to him the virtues of many good deeds, then said:

“Shall I inform you of the foundation of all of that ?”.

Mu`âdh said: “Certainly”.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) took hold of his tongue and said:

“Restrain yourself from this.”

Mu`âdh then asked: “O Prophet of Allah! Are we held to task for the things that we say?” The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: “May your mother be bereaved of you, O Mu`âdh! Does anything topple people headlong into the Hellfire save the harvests of their tongues?” [*Sunan al-Tirmidhî* and *Sunan Ibn Mâjah*]

Some other hadiths relevant to this matter are as follows:

“Indeed a servant will speak a word pleasing to Allah that he thinks to be insignificant, but because of it Allah raises him by many degrees. And indeed a servant will speak a word displeasing to Allah that he thinks to be insignificant, but because of it, He will consign him to the Hellfire.” [*Sahîh al-Bukhârî*]

“A man might speak a word without thinking about its implications, but because of it, he will plunge into the Hellfire further than the distance between the east and west.” [*Sahîh al-Bukhârî* and *Sahîh Muslim*]

So all these hadiths and many others that I have not mentioned and many verses of the Holy Quran should make us think before we say anything and not be like those people who have to say something in order to know what they have said. Members will recall that recently a missionary who worked in Mauritius during the mid-1950s died and in his sermon of 18th September the caliph mentioned the deceased noble deeds as he usually does on such occasions. Unfortunately the caliph mentions that the missionary in charge from Mauritius has sent a report about that missionary about the work that he accomplished in Mauritius. Among other things the caliph said “When in 1954 some members refused to obey Hafiz Bashiruddin Obeidullah (who was the missionary in charge) the Jamaat split into two. One group refused to obey and they made their own association. Then the second caliph asked him (the deceased missionary) who was at that time in Palestine to go to Mauritius quickly..... With great wisdom he took stock of the situation and he wrested control of the mosque from the hypocrites or *murtaddeen* meaning apostates.....” In order to avoid any confusion I will say it in Urdu as it has been reported on the alislam.org site “*Ounhon neh bari hikmat se haalaat ka ja’iza liya*

aur phir masjid pe jo monafeqeen ne qabza kiya houwa tha ya murtaddeen ne qabza kiya houwa tha ousko bare hikmat se bare tarikeh se ratam karaya.” .

In this statement of the caliph which has been fed to him by the present missionary in charge from Mauritius there are two statements which are untrue. At that time it was the Managing committee of the Jamaat which was not obeying what the Missionary in charge was saying. So there was no need for them to form another association and they did not do so. It was the group of Ahmadis who sided with the missionary who went and formed another association. Secondly the missionary in charge does not know Islam as he should have known when he qualified those who were running the Ahmadiyya Muslim association of that time as apostates (*murtaddeen*). He and the caliph as well should have known that such words cannot be used against those who believe in the tenets of Islam as propounded by the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw) and Hazrat Masih Maood (as). When the missionary in charge sends such a report or when the caliph utters such words they insult the memory and the descendants of all those who stood by the Ahmadiyya Muslim association of that time. This is the love that is being spread by the caliph and his missionary in charge around the world! Can peace be achieved in the world with such declarations? Will there be anyone among the Ahmadis who has enough fear of Allah in his heart to summon the necessary courage to tell their leaders that they have spoken words which are untrue? May Allah have mercy upon all of them and us as well.