

TUESDAY 20 September was a public holiday, has been for many years, because the night before on 15 Sha'ban of the Arabic calendar Muslims in Bangladesh observed Shab-e-Bara'at, in other words a night when many believe fates are written.

The day is not a public holiday, nor observed as such in other Muslim countries for instance Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Malaysia Bahrain, Egypt, UAE (Leilat al-Meiraj is), Qatar, Syria, Iran (Leilat al-Meiraj is), Iraq and Morocco. It is not a public holiday in India or Pakistan.

Islamic scholars on NTV Dhaka, as perhaps did others, on the night of 15 Sha'ban appealed to religious teachers and imams across the country to preach Islam according to the Qur'an and Hadith, and explain to the Allah-fearing people of Bangladesh the truth about the night.

Their conviction matched that of another scholar of the website Islamic Voice: There is nothing in the Qur'an about the night of 15 Sha'ban. There is a narration in Tirmidhi, which is considered as Za'eef (weak) according to Imam Tirmidhi. All the narrations regarding glorification of the night are weak. The authentic Hadiths inform us that Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) with the exception of Ramadan, never kept so many fasts as in Sha'ban. But we also find that the Prophet (Pbuh) forbade others to keep any fast after the mid Sha'ban. Other than this, no reference of the 15th night is authentic.

Shias believe that 15 Sha'ban is the birth date of their last and 12th Imam, who is invisible and will come back as Imam Mehdi. This may be the reason behind *halwas*, crackers and other celebration-like things prevalent among those who lack knowledge.

Every moment of the day or night when Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) is remembered is pious, but again there is nothing in the Qur'an and Sunnah which links the Prophet to the said night in particular.

The weak narrations, stating that fate is written in this night are to be ignored because they contradict the Qur'an. The Qur'an in clear words ascribes the pre-eminence of Shab-e-Qad'r or Lailat-ul-Qad'r. It says: *'Verily we have sent it (The Qur'an) down in the night of Al-Qad'r (The Decree)... The night of Decree is better than a thousand months. Therein descend the angels and Ruh (the spirit) by Allah's permission with all decrees.'* (97:1-4)

In another Surah, the same thing has been specified: *'We sent it (The Qur'an) down on a blessed night. Verily we are ever warning. Therein is decreed every matter of ordainment.'* (44:3-4)

It is clear from the above verses that the night in which the Lord sets the decree about individuals, races and countries, is Shab-e-Qad'r and not Shab-e-Bara'at.

In Shab-e-Qad'r or Lailat-ul-Qad'r or the Night of Decree, the decisions are conveyed for the year to the concerned angels about the life and death, continuance and soon occurring in the lives of people. The Prophet (Pbuh) said: *'Explore the (occurrence of) night of decree in the odd nights of the last Ashra (1/3rd) of Ramadan.'* (Bukhari)

The Almighty made the Prophet forget the exact date of the

The Night of Decree

CHINTITO

night of decree, he told. *'The identification of the night of decree has been withdrawn and it is perhaps better for you.'* (Bukhari)

The popular belief is that the night falls on 27th of Ramadan but in the books of Hadith, there are different versions favouring different nights.

Narrated Abu Saeed Khudri that the Prophet (Pbuh) said: I was shown the night of decree but later I forgot it. (I only remember that) on the morning after the night. I prostrated on water and mud. Now that I have forgotten, you should seek it among the odd nights of the last 1/3rd of Ramadan.

The narrator further says that (the Prophet meant that) it rained on the night of Qad'r (that year). As the roof of the Mosque was made of date branches, the water seeped through (resulting in mud on the floor). My eyes observed that there was mark of mud and water on the forehead of the Prophet (Pbuh) on the morning following the 21st night. (Bukhari)

Reported Abdullah Bin Anees that he requested the Prophet (Pbuh) to inform him of that night so that he could stay inside the Mosque on that night, as he lived in the forest (and could not come on alternate nights). The Prophet told him to stay awake for the 23rd night.

Later, enquiries were made of his son about his father's routine. He confirmed that his father entered the Mosque after the As'r prayer on 22nd of Ramadan and did not come out for anything until the Faj'r Salat of the next morning. After the Faj'r he found his horse at the doorstep of the Mosque and went to his house in jungle. (Abu Dawood)

Reported Zir bin Hubaish that when he asked (the companion) Ubai Bin Ka'ab he replied that the night is 27th. Then he swore and did not say Insha Allah and said: indeed, it is the night of 27th. I asked him what made him so sure and Ka'ab replied: On the basis of that sign which the Prophet (Pbuh) had told us. The morning following the night, there are no sun-rays at sun-rise. (Muslim)

Similarly, there are other narrations favouring other nights. It seems that the night is not always fixed. Lailat-ul-Qad'r, it may be derived from the above, falls on different nights on different years. There also is another probability. The night may be different for different people. Allah may shower His blessings upon whomsoever of his bondsmen He is pleased with, on any night of His choosing. This probability is also strengthened from another fact. The occurrence of moon is on different dates in different regions of earth. When there is an even date in one country, it is an odd date in another, according to the variance of moon in the countries.

Most of the time in Shab-e-Qad'r should preferably be devoted to reciting and trying to understand the meaning of the Qur'an as the glory of the Night is associated with the revelation of Qur'an. Qur'an is Afzal-uz-Zikr (The best of remembrance).

A prayer specially recommended by the Prophet (Pbuh) for the night: *Allahumma innaka Tuhibbul Afwa Fa'fu A'anne; O Allah thou art Forgiving and loves the Forgiver, so forgive me.* (Ahmad, Ibne Majah, Tirmidhi)

May Allah forgive us all!