



Central Moon Sighting Committee of Great Britain

(Jamiyat Ulama Britain, Darul Uloom Bury, Hizbul Ulama UK)

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Why our fasting times and timetable are not wrong

Word of Advice

The recently circulated pamphlet *"Your fasting times are wrong"* is a misguided attempt to frighten Muslims who follow the timetable of Hizbul Ulama, Jamiyat Ulama and Markazi Jamiyat Ulama. Do not be influenced by this. It is not the way our Akabireen has taught us to behave when there are differences in opinion and it is totally impermissible to cause dissension and fitnah in this way. Their main objection is that the timetable does not match the observations but they fail to point out that the times are within sharee hoodud. This article will provide details about the validity of the timetable and ensure you have confidence in the timetable of the Ulama. Note very carefully that the Ulama who carried out the Mushahadah were highly knowledgeable and well respected and knew what they were doing. It is therefore slanderous and tantamount to Buhtan for the critics to cast aspersions on those Ulama who gave up their valuable time and sacrificed their sleep, gave up other commitments and braved harsh UK weather conditions to try and bring unity in UK timetables.

Background to the Hizbul Ulama UK timetable

There is at the moment a fierce un-Islamic onslaught by a select few on the Hizbul Ulama UK/Jamiyat Ulama and Markazi Jamiyat Ulama Bartaniya backed timetable (referred to hereafter as HU/JU/MJU or collectively as "the Jamaats"). In recent days a pamphlet was distributed titled *"Your fasting times are wrong"* trying to frighten people. The pamphlet tries to show that the Hizbul Ulama UK timetables are wrong. This is the latest tactic in a series of fierce unprecedented attacks on the timetable and the scholars of the Jamaats personally.

The recent spate of attacks appear to have been triggered by an event in London which saw this timetable, just before Ramadan, accepted by key London Umbrella Organisations and Masajid comprising at least 36 organisations including the Islamic Cultural Centre & London Central Mosque (ICC), Mayfair Islamic Centre, East London Mosque, Muslim Welfare House, Al Manaar - The Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre, Masjid Al Tawhid & Islamic Sharia Council, Al Muntada al Islami Trust, London Muslim Forum (25 members) and many others. This decision came on the back of an initial meeting hosted by ICC at Regents Park, London, on Thursday 25th March 2010. After no less than a year of deliberation and research, an Ijma (consensus) was reached by these organisations to adopt this timetable just before Ramadan 1432 (July 2011). This historic decision in London comes after 23 years since the Ulama undertook the task of unifying the timetable for the United Kingdom. It is a hugely positive step not just for London but for the UK as whole.

Four decades ago in the UK there were a range of timetables ranging from 12-18 degrees (and other fixed methods) to perform Fajar and Isha. There was confusion all round and fierce disagreements were common amongst the Muslims. Arguments took place repeatedly within the community and many people were becoming fed-up and getting more and more agitated

until one day hope arrived. After considerable pressure from key people and committees of Masajids on the Scholars, the Scholars resolved to sort out this issue in the same way as they had resolved the Moon sighting issue previously at a mass meeting of the Ulama at Darul Uloom, Bury.

The Ulama realised that the only way to resolve this issue was by carrying out a mushahadah. The spark for this mushahadah was ignited just over 80 years ago by Hakimul Ummat Hazrat Thanvi RA when he urged a questioner from Scotland to conduct a mushahadah. But how do you carry out mushahadah in a country like the UK? The questioner from Scotland had responded to Hazrat by saying it was not possible to carry out a mushahadah in the UK. Lots of questions came to the mind of the Ulama. Weather conditions, time commitment, whether or not it would be possible to observe etc presented as major challenges. A group of Ulama under the supervision of HU, resolved to do what they can to solve this problem and took it upon themselves to unite the Muslims of the UK on Fajar and Isha times.

A group of Ulama courageously volunteered and began a year long effort to complete a mushahadah which was to begin in September 1987. After three months of Mushahadah, HU referred the issue of differences they were finding in the time length between the mushahadah and degree times to the Muftiyane Kiram of the Indian Sub Continent. The responses from Muftiyane Kiram were encouraging and did not result in the Ulama abandoning the effort and going back to degrees.

After a full seven months of effort, braving of weather conditions, and setting aside other responsibilities, a meeting was held in Masjid Anisul Islam, Troy Street, Blackburn, United Kingdom, on Saturday 15th Shaban 1408 (2nd April 1988). The meeting was attended by countless Ulama from all over the Country who were all looking forward to this pressing issue to be resolved. This joint meeting between the Ulama of the Jamaats (HU, JU and MJU) was conducted under a joint Imarat of Molana Musa Karmadi, convener of HU, and Molana Ubaidurrahman Camelpuri RA, Executive Member of JU.

Present at this gathering were the Mushahadeen (observers) and many eminent personalities including Molana Ahmed Pandor (Chair-JU) Molana Mohamad Hassan Tai Chair-MJU, Molana Lutfurrahman RA VChair-MJU, Molana Musa Qasmi, Molana Ismail Makoria Chair-HU, Molana Ismail Bhuta Principal-Madrastul Banat, Molana Fazle Haq Wadi, Principal, Madrasah Banat, Lancaster, Mufti Mustupha Principal-Darul Uloom London, Molana Aslam Zahid, Mufti Abdus Samad Principal -Jamiatul Ilm Walhuda, Molana Ahmed Sidat sab, well known community leader and Chairman of Jamea Masjid Blackburn, and many others too numerous to mention.

At this meeting the Ulama who carried out the Mushahadah disclosed what they had observed to the point that it was not left as fait accompli that they had observed a particular phenomenon. It was left to the meeting to decide what was observed e.g. whether the observations were that of Subha Sadiq, Subha Kadhib or some other phenomenon.

The following provides an outline of what was observed through the Mushahadat during the first seven months (September-March):

1. The first light of morning which began as a broad band of light on the horizon from its beginning and spread very quickly at the breadth of the horizon (reaching the condition of Tabayyun within a few minutes), and continuing to increase in broadness and intensity until sunrise

2. During the seven months we did not see any light which resembled the description of Subha Kadhib i.e. light on the length of the horizon appearing like the tail of a Wolf or in the shape of a pyramid, and then diminishing slowly and then completely disappearing before the onset of Subha Sadiq
3. We observed, at the western horizon, the end of the sun's red afterglow after sunset followed by the complete disappearance of the whiteness in the sky

After a thorough examination by the Ulama lasting about three hours, the Ulama determined from the description given what phenomena were Subha Kadhib, Subha Sadiq, Shafaq Ahmar, Shafaq Abyadh etc.

The following resolutions were then agreed:

1. That in the light of the numerous and consistent Fataawa of Muftiyane Kiram which were received after the first three months of Mushahadah, that Mushahadah is the original basis of determining prayer times, and that against this background, relying on the accuracy of observatory times was incorrect.
2. It was unanimously resolved that Mushahadah be completed for the rest of the remaining five months after which another meeting of the Ulama be held to consider the remaining results.
3. That, in the meantime, the Muslims of the UK prepare forthwith their timetables according to the chart prepared based on the Mushahadah of seven months.
4. That for the remaining five months not covered by Mushahadah, the prayers are fixed on the basis of Takdir, but only for a temporary period. When the Mushahadah of the remaining five months be completed, a comprehensive chart be prepared based on observance of Subha Sadiq and Isha for a complete year.
5. It was also resolved that once the full year Mushahadah is completed that any unobserved days due to bad weather conditions be filled by the method of Takdir as is permitted by Shariah (Imdadul Fatawa Vol 1 Page 98)

Likewise, the Ulama continued their Mushahadah and after completing this most noble project on behalf of the Muslims of the UK, held another meeting on Monday 24 JamaDilAwwal 1409 Hijri (2 January 1989).

At this meeting details of the Mushahadah of the additional five months (April-August) were given, as follows. Where differences existed between the two sets of Mushahadat these were highlighted:

1. On 2nd and 6th May a very narrow light was observed on the length of the sky which resembled a pyramid. This light then died down slowly and merged with the First Light of morning
2. The gaps between the Subha Sadiq times and sunrise; and between sunset and end of the red afterglow (shafaq ahmar) were much wider during the latter five months than observed

during the first seven months Mushahadat. It appeared there were differences between the Mushahadat carried out in winter and the Mushahadat carried out in the summer months.

3. A unique phenomenon was observed from the end of May until 6th of June. An apparition in the form of an arc was noticed. It appeared to be 'vapoury' in appearance and was not visually as distinct to enable us to confidently describe it as a light phenomenon. The "arc" appeared to slowly inch towards the east i.e. at the location of sunrise, along the edge of the earth and sky. As First Light appeared, this image disappeared.

4. In the middle of June we observed the disappearance of the red afterglow (shafaqe ahmar) but the whiteness in the sky remained throughout the night becoming brighter and covering an extensive area of the sky. Subha Sadiq was not possible to observe as it seemed that conditions of Shafaq did not end and merged with the light of dawn.

5. During May and June the First Light of morning took incredibly longer to spread along the horizon than observed before. Instead of reaching Tabayyun in only a few minutes as observed during previous months, the condition of Tabayyun took much longer averaging from 20 minutes to over one hour and fifteen minutes, during these two months.

It was agreed at this meeting to use First Light times generally for Subha Sadiq but to use Tabayyun times (spreading of light) during summer months. It was also agreed to use Shafaqe Abyadh (disappearance of whiteness) for Isha generally but to use Shafaqe Ahmer (disappearance of red after glow) during summer due to haraj (hardship). Phasing of times to get to one method to the other was agreed for both Subha and Isha. Accordingly, a chart based on the agreement of the Ulama was distributed to UK Masajids. This is how unity was reached on the issue that divided the Muslim community in Britain for far too long.

Sadly, the unity was later broken by people who preferred to base their prayer timings on Degree times provided by the Observatory. Some Masjid chose the easy route by adopting 15 Degrees whilst others adopted 18 Degrees believing that 15 or 18 degrees represented the correct timings. There were also those who held Isha one hour after Maghrib all year round, whilst some held Isha one hour after Maghrib only during the summer. There were those who followed degrees and other methods simply for the sake of convenience, as the internet made it so easy to produce instant computations of Salat times for their own locality.

Please note that the group of Ulama who carried out the Mushahadah in Blackburn, Lancashire, UK, did so during a complete year and **did not set out to test Degree times**, thereby disregarding the times provided by the Observatory and starting from a clean sheet. They were, therefore, not psychologically swayed by already given Observatory times. Many other Mushahadah have tended to determine the level of solar depression level to use for the prayer times and the Ulama have made limited test observations at the times provided by the Observatory. Our observations, therefore, unlike the observations of others did not seek to confirm or reject any of the Observatory degree times but to provide prayer timings based purely on what was observed.

This timetable, based on the observations in Blackburn, from September 1987 to August 1988 yielded 98 successful observations, not 11 as some people are claiming. These consist of 34 for Subha Sadiq (27 First Light and 7 Tabayyun, the latter limited to summer), 62 Isha (22 Shafaqe Ahmer, and 40 Shafaqe Abyadh). The observations were made available at the

gathering of the Ulama and published despite what critics say that only 11 observations were published.

These observations were used to construct a timetable for a full year which can be applied to all parts of the UK using the **gaps in twilight length** determined by the observations. Solar depression angles too determine twilight length and, likewise, the twilight length determined from actual mushahadah were used to prepare timetables in other towns and cities.

The Mushahadah and the construction of the timetable were based on countless Fatawa from Muftiyane Kiram from the Indian Sub Continent following direct correspondence during the mushahadah. These are summarised in the Urdu book, *Bartaniya Me Isha Ka Sahih Waqt* and some in the English book, *Fajar and Isha and Twilight*, available on the Hizbul Ulama website.

There have also been fatwa issued post observations such as the **Fatwa by Mufti Azam, Pakistan, Hazrat Mufti Rafi Uthmani Sab, MZT** who has expressly drawn attention to the supremacy of mushahadah over degree times in his book Nawdirul Fiqh. Mufti Sahib says that even if observations were carried out for a few days only and a gap in twilight length determined from these limited observations, the timetable will be permissible for not only those who have confidence in the observations but **even those who hold some doubt** about the observations carried out. Mufti Sab assumed the observations were carried out for only a few days yet rules it permissible. The questioner did not provide full details about the extensive observations as outlined above and Hazrat therefore assumed a few observations were carried out and a fixed time length was determined for twilight. Imagine how Hazrat would have responded if he knew how many observations were successfully completed!

[\(Click here for the article, "which timetable should you follow?"\)](#)

Some Fatwas regarding Mushahadah

1. Mufti Abdullah Kawi, Darul Uloom Bharuch, India, has ruled that the basis of determining Salat times is on Mushahadah according to Sharee guidance and boundaries. The determination of Salat times are not based on scientific findings. Where Mushahadah confirms the times provided through scientific findings then it will be permissible to follow these times. However, where there are differences between these two, then Mushahadah will take precedence and the times determined through scientific methods will have to be ignored.
2. Mufti Abdusshakoor Tirmizi, Madrassah Arabiya Haqaniyah, Sargodha, Pakistan, said, "The knowledge of Mushahadah is more reliable and in using Hisabat there is an element of doubt".
3. Mufti Mohammad Farid, Darul Uloom Haqaniyah, Pakistan, said, "**Every month you should carry out a Mushahadah on two or three days.** Leave aside the use of degrees as even in Indo-Pak it has been shown to contradict Mushahadah".

4. Mufti Shafi' RA, in answer to a question about the use of degrees replied that "it is permissible to use degrees provided that the times have been verified by Mushahadah".
5. Hazrat Molana Ashraf Ali Thanvi RA ruled that it is not possible to determine Subha Sadiq without carrying out Mushahadah (Bawadirun Nawadir, Assa'at Lit'ta'at, Page 429)
6. Mufti Mohammad Amin, Mazahirul Uloom, Sahranpur, India, states that "Salat times are related to Mushahadat. Mushahadah will be given precedence. Mushahadah is the original basis of determining Salat times and these will be taken as the correct times. In the Hadith Mushahadah is the method enshrined in the Shariah and there is no mention of degrees and no other formula for approximation. Shariah basis the determination of Salat times on the simplicity contained within nature. Therefore, in the determination of Shafaq and Subha it is not necessary to go in the middle of a mountain or board an aeroplane or a rocket or to go in the middle of the ocean to find out the precise times. But, where there is a populace one may carry out a Mushahadah with plainness and simplicity and according to the guidelines in Shariah. This will be sufficient".

What the pious Ulama say about differences

It is totally inappropriate for this group to force their own timetables down people's throats and to condemn other timetables. The language they have used in emails have been highly charged and full of despair and frustration. Do they think Allah Subhanahu Wata Ala will not accept the fasting and prayer of sincere Muslims because **they** say so? Do they have a monopoly on the truth? The truth is that they do not have all the answers and are not permitted by Shariah to do what they are doing.

Hazrat Mufti Mahmudul Hasan Gangohi RA- One of our greatest Muftis' and buzrug of the century ruled about differences of opinion in timetables many years go. The declaration by Hazrat Gangohi RA in 1983 at Jame Masjid, Howard Street, Bradford, circulated by the critics, suggesting an agreement on adopting 18 degrees, it will be remembered, was revoked by Hazrat and Hazrat issued another Fatwa at the same time, which Molana Qasmi has used in his book ruling that any method one adopts will be permitted. This is also evidenced by a pamphlet published at the time by Jamiatul Ulama Britain and by Hazrat Maulana Ismail Manubari sahib personally the Muhtamim of Darul Uloom Bharuch.

Note also that the gathering in Bradford took place in 1983 and the Hizbul Ulama observations were carried out much later, in 1987/88 and final agreement by the Ulama reached in 1989, yet the article "*your fasting times are wrong*" gives the impression that Hazrat Mufti Sab did not "*give leeway to follow the Hizbul Ulama timetable*". This is highly deceptive as at the time of Hazrat's visit the mushahadah had not even taken place.

It was at this very meeting which resulted in the 70 year old "spark" of mushahadah ignited by Hazrat Thanvi RA, to turn into a flame in the hearts of some Ulama.

[\(Click here for references and evidence\)](#)

Mufti Azam Hazrat Maulana Rafi' Uthmani Sahib- One of our top Scholars and the Grand Mufti in Pakistan also permits the adoption of different methods including 18 degrees

(for Fasting only, as Hazrat advocates praying Fajar much later to ensure Fajar time has properly entered) as well as the Mushahadah timetable. In fact, as mentioned above already, despite believing, from the way the question from Leicester was posed, that the Mushahadah was only for a few days which determined a fixed gap of 1 hour and 35 minutes in twilight length, Hazrat deems this permissible. He goes much further and says it **will be permissible for even those who have doubt in the mushahadah!** Alhamdulillah!

Hazrat refers to the decision of the Ulama in Blackburn, as tantamount to a Fatwa in his book Nawdirul Fiqh. These are the wise Scholars who do not condemn differences but allow flexibility and ease. Hazrat rules 18 degrees as "Zanni", not "Qat'i" in his book Nawdirul Fiqh and also rules "Zanni" not "qat'i" the fact that twilight length for Isha and Fajar are the same". More on this later.

Maintaining Islamic manners at all times

In terms of criticising other methods such as is going on by the ferocious few look at what Sheikh Haitham al Haddad has said:

"Having written this and respectfully disagreeing with others, I urge all to maintain the Islamic etiquette of differing. We should not allow such differences to disunite us or place enmity in our hearts. May Allah keep us united, keep our hearts pure, and forgive our shortcomings".

What I have found recently goes against the spirit of this wonderful advice and the ferocious few have hurled abuse on the internet and have made repeated slanderous comment personalising this debate to such an extent that a great deal of frustration and despair is exhibited by them. It is as though the few have taken on the burden of the whole world and unless they win their argument the world will be lost and qiyamah will come. May Allaah give them hidayah and forgive them for their error. Aameen.

I have said previously and as already mentioned above that where there are genuine fiqhi differences no one should say the other is wrong, let alone hurl abuse and personal insults like what they are doing at the moment.

What these critics are doing is going against Islamic etiquette and those who have seen their emails have witnessed hatred in their words. Again may Allah give them hidayah and forgive their sins. Ameen.

What are they objecting to?

1. Hizbul Ulama timetable does not follow their own observed times- The main point of criticism by these people concerns the construction of the timetable.

The way the timetable was constructed and agreed by the meeting of the Ulama affiliated to Hizbul Ulama, Jamiyat Ulama and Markazi Jamiyat Ulama at Masjid Anisul Islam, Troy Street, Blackburn, is to perform Isha on Shafaqe Abyadh (disappearance of the whiteness) except in summer months due to haraj (hardship) when Shafaqe Ahmer would be used. The times would be phased to get from one to the other.

Likewise for Fajar, the times observed for First Light would be used except for summer when the times observed for Tabayyun (spreading of light along the horizon) would be used. Again times will need to be phased to get from one to the other.

This method results in some times that are “in between” times. This is what the critics object to. However, as this method necessitates phasing to avoid “jumping” times it is perfectly valid particularly as the times are within “hudoode shariah”.

This method is very similar to the phasing used for timetables following 18 degrees which the critics adopt. The latest time for Isha based on 18 degrees is about 12.30 am (yes 12.30am!) yet no Masjid performs Isha after 12.30am, not even the Masjid the critics are controlling.

By their own standards what they should be doing is to perform Isha after 12.30am until “twilight persists” and then move onto fixed times but everyone knows this is not what is practised. They too use the phasing method to get to the fixed times and their times too do not match 18 degrees all year round.

This is the observatory computed 18 degree timetable for London for the month of May only by way of illustration, which you can compare with the Masjid timetable of those who claim to follow 18 degrees. Just look at the time of Isha on this chart. “Twilight persist time” does not begin until the end of May yet they start to adjust their times from March and continue to do this until September.

London May timetable, 18 degrees Subha/18 degrees Shafaq

			Subha	Sunrise	Noon	Asr1	Asr2	Sunset	Isha
2011	5	1	03 05	05 33	12 58	17 01	18 05	20 23	22 53
2011	5	2	03 02	05 32	12 58	17 01	18 06	20 25	22 56
2011	5	3	02 58	05 30	12 58	17 02	18 07	20 27	23 00
2011	5	4	02 55	05 28	12 58	17 03	18 08	20 28	23 03
2011	5	5	02 51	05 26	12 57	17 03	18 09	20 30	23 07
2011	5	6	02 47	05 24	12 57	17 04	18 10	20 31	23 11
2011	5	7	02 43	05 23	12 57	17 04	18 11	20 33	23 14
2011	5	8	02 39	05 21	12 57	17 05	18 12	20 35	23 18
2011	5	9	02 35	05 19	12 57	17 06	18 12	20 36	23 22
2011	5	10	02 31	05 17	12 57	17 06	18 13	20 38	23 26
2011	5	11	02 27	05 16	12 57	17 07	18 14	20 39	23 31
2011	5	12	02 23	05 14	12 57	17 08	18 15	20 41	23 35
2011	5	13	02 19	05 13	12 57	17 08	18 16	20 42	23 40
2011	5	14	02 14	05 11	12 57	17 09	18 17	20 44	23 44
2011	5	15	02 09	05 10	12 57	17 09	18 18	20 46	23 49
2011	5	16	02 04	05 08	12 57	17 10	18 19	20 47	23 55
2011	5	17	01 59	05 07	12 57	17 10	18 20	20 48	24 00
2011	5	18	01 53	05 05	12 57	17 11	18 21	20 50	24 06
2011	5	19	01 47	05 04	12 57	17 12	18 21	20 51	24 13
2011	5	20	01 41	05 02	12 57	17 12	18 22	20 53	24 21

2011	5	21	01 33	05 01	12 57	17 13	18 23	20 54	24 31
2011	5	22	01 23	05 00	12 57	17 13	18 24	20 56	24 48
2011	5	23	01 07	04 59	12 57	17 14	18 25	20 57	** **

Regarding the Hizbul Ulama timetable they give examples of two dates where there are alleged discrepancies but these are within the sharee hoodud and therefore permissible as one may go on eating **up to** Tabayyun conditions as did some Sahaba Kiram RA Ajmaeen.

DATE	First Light gap	Tabayyun gap	Gap in timetable	Within Sharee Hoodud?
May 21	2hr 22m	1hr 32m	1hr 51m	YES
Aug 16	1hr 54m	1hr 24m	1hr 40m	YES

2. First Light and Tabayyun- With regard to the issue of First Light vs Tabayyun, Mufti Saeed Ahmed Palanpuri with the support of Mufti Mohammad Amin and Mufti Abdur-Rauf says that there is disagreement in Hanafi Fiqh on whether the beginning of Fast is from Fajare Haqiqi or from its Tabayyun (i.e. when the light has spread along the horizon). Whilst the beginning of the Fast at First Light is the safer of the two, the time of Tabayyun allows ease and is permissible. This ruling is supported by Mufti Saeed Ahmed who referred to Hazrat Molana Binori's Marifuss Sunan, Volume 5, Page 323, which itself is based on Fatawa Hindiyah, the Fatawa Alamghiri, which uses Halwani, Al Muhiti and Khazanatul Fatawa in support of this ruling. As mentioned we have used First Light observed time for most months except summer where we have used Tabayyun times. Phasing is used and although the phasing results in "in between" times, this is permissible as it is within "Sharee Hoodud" and it was not something that a group of Ulama thrustled onto the masses without Shoora but properly proposed, debated and agreed at the gathering of the Ulama and Muftiyane Kiram in Blackburn.

Note that there is leeway (gunjaish) in shariah for Suhur but not for Fajar. If Fajar is prayed before its time it will not be accepted but Allah Subhanahu Tala has placed flexibility in the time of suhur as is seen from the practise of the Sahaba Kiram RA Ajmaeen.

Dr Khalid Shaukat says:

"The variation you may see is not an alarming variation. Remember, in the time of Prophet SallallahuAlaihiWasallam, there were no watches. Much more variations were in practice..... Quran mentions Fajar time as when you can differentiate a black thread from a white thread. Some Sahabi (RA) was observed to physically take two threads and trying to see them; the Prophet SallallahuAlaihiWasallam clarified to him that this is not the intent of Shariah. It is when the very faint light of morning begins to spread horizontally in the darkness of night. This phenomenon is not very strictly quantifiable".

[\(Click for article "Subha Sadiq and its starting time" by Maulana, Dr A.Z.M Sayeed Chowdhury, Glasgow University\)](#)

3. Rejection of Mushahadah by Fatwa- They say, 'senior Muftiyane Kiram in the UK and abroad have condemned it as unreliable and the result of a lack of understanding, expertise and experience'. This is a highly exaggerated claim and the use of the word "**condemn**" is totally

inappropriate. A fatwa from Darul Uloom Bharuch (Kantharia) is used to reject the mushahadah. Mufti Bharkodrawi of Kantharia rules it is not permitted to use Blackburn observations in other locations but we have not done so. What we have done is determine the twilight length and apply that to locations in the UK all of which are within the latitude parameters of 50-60 degrees ie only ten degrees for the whole land mass of Britain, unlike India or the US which are very large countries. I ask, how is it permissible to apply the same solar depression angle eg 18 deg to the whole UK, no, to the whole world, when in practical effect **what degrees also do is determine the twilight** length just as it has been done by way of mushahadah. Ask any scientist about this and they will confirm this point.

In any case there are genuine differences between the Muftiyane Kiram on many issues. I have already said that **Mufti Azam damat barkatuhum, Mufti Rafi' Usmani Sahib** has not only permitted this timetable despite thinking that the mushahadah was only carried out for a few days, but refers to the decision of the Ulama in Blackburn as tantamount to a Fatwa.

Note very carefully that the Ulama who carried out the Mushahadah were highly knowledgeable and well respected and knew what they were doing. It is therefore slanderous and tantamount to Buhtan for the critics to cast aspersions on those Ulama who gave up their valuable time and sacrificed their sleep, gave up other commitments and braved harsh UK weather conditions. They also backed up their observations and the construction of the timetable with Fatawa from many Muftiyane Kiram, and post Mushahadah by Hazrat Mufti Rafi' Uthmani MZT in his Fatwa. Have faith therefore in the work of our Ulama who strove to unite the Muslims of the UK with a very mighty effort.

4. Mufti Taqi Usmani Sab MZT- The critics say that Mufti Sahib has ruled the Hizbul Ulama timetable unreliable. This ruling was issued on 23 January 1991 before Mufti Sahib had the chance to study the mushahadah in any depth and therefore only based on the question submitted. Following this, many years later, Mufti Sahib, during a visit to the UK, requested a meeting to learn more about the mushahadah and time table met personally with Molvi Miftahi and Molana Musa Karmadi Sahib after having read the books on the Mushahadah. Mufti Sahib asked questions including how the gaps were filled when observations were unsuccessful. On this issue it was explained to Mufti Sahib that the twilight length was determined with gaps between observations being equalised and followed the method by Hazrat Thanvi's RA in Imdadul Fatawa and Bawadirun Navadir. A very detailed discussion took place with Mufti Sahib but Mufti Sahib did not object when reference to Hazrat Thanvi's method was mentioned and he did not nullify the timetable even though he had the opportunity to do so directly.

5. Hazrat Thanvi RA- The critics also negate the use of the method of construction by Hazrat Thanvi RA by saying that the method was not for the UK but for the place where the question was aimed at. Also, they claim, it was to do with moon rise and moon set days on two particular days of the month. When one looks at the references it is clear that the two methods outlined by Hazrat are to do with the moon rise and set method for Subha Sadiq and the shadow length method for Zohar and Asar. **From both these methods the principle of filling in gaps is established.** However, even if we accept the argument that the principle does not apply to filling in gaps for mushahadah and that it is restricted to a place in India, Hazrat Mufti Azam, Rafi Uthmani Sahib puts an end to the matter by ruling that the use of Qiyas in this way is permitted. This method is also common sense and logical and scientifically valid. As we all know each day shifts by two or three minutes and it is perfectly appropriate to

add these minutes in the days when twilight times were not successfully observed. What other method is there to fill gaps between two observations?

[\(Click here for reference to Hazrat Thanvi's writings\)](#)

6. According to the critics 18 degrees is the only correct method- These people also make a big fuss about the use of 18 degrees and seem to believe that 18 degrees and no other method is the true and only method. Whilst it is true 18 degrees is used in most tropical countries including India and Pakistan, the Ulama clearly say that the use of 18 degrees is "zanni" not "qat'i". This is precisely what Mufti Azam has said in his fatwa and many other Ulama who have ruled on 18 degrees. If, as the critics claim, 18 degrees is determined by careful observations, why do the Ulama rule it as "zanni"? The Ulama know there are differences in observations and that the scientists are unable to confirm subha sadiq at 18 degrees, hence it is difficult for the Muftiyane Kiram to confirm 18 degrees as definite.

Mufti Azam, Mufti Rafi Uthmani Sahib despite being present during the Mushahadah in Pakistan led by Professor A. Latiff, resulting in 18 degrees rules it "zanni". "Remember", Hazrat says, "*there are differences amongst the Ulama and the experts on this issue*". When following 18 degrees, Hazrat advocates delaying the performance of Fajar by 20 minutes. How can that be? Why does Mufti Sab not rule 18 degrees as "definite" when his own mushahadah suggested it is 18 deg? Hazrat Mufti sab it will be remembered was part of the group led by his father Hazrat Mufti Shafi' sahib RA which determined 15 degrees for Subha Sadiq and Mufti Shafi' RA issued Fatwa at the time on this basis. There is conflict in the two sets of mushahadah where Mufti Rafi' Sahib was present. **It is therefore understandable why caution is adopted by Mufti Sahib.** My view is that if observations were carried out all year round in Pakistan fluctuations would necessarily have emerged explaining the discrepancy. This is what many observations around the world and the Hizbul Ulama observations (especially at the higher latitude of the UK) in particular, have found ie there is no single degree for the whole year. (See also section below "Observations around the world").

Consider also what the experts say about 18 degrees:

United States Naval Observatory- "Before the beginning of astronomical twilight in the morning and after the end of astronomical twilight in the evening the sun does not contribute to sky illumination; for a considerable interval after the beginning of morning twilight and before the end of evening twilight, **sky illumination is so feint that it is practically imperceptible**"

G.V.Rozenberg, Twilight: a study in atmospheric optics- "During this period of illumination, conditions can hardly be distinguished from night"

Dr Steve Bell, Royal Greenwich Observatory- "At depressions of the sun of 15 degrees and 18 degrees, the horizon would not be visible."

Dr John Caldwell, University of Texas, Austin McDonald Observatory, "...there is very little change of luminance (sky) or illuminance (ground) between 18 and 15 deg of solar depression, and then it starts to go up exponentially... from an astronomers point of view, we keep working with NO change in tactics (even on the hardest objects) right up to 15 deg. Practically speaking full productivity in getting good data does not require any special change between 18-15."

Dr Omar Afzal, Shaukat, Imam, When to pray Fajar and Isha - "The change in illumination from 13 to 18 degrees is so negligible that without instruments ...the change would not make any appreciable difference to the naked eye".

Dr Mohammed Ilyas, Astronomy of Islamic Times for the Twenty First Century, "Unfortunately, Latiff has argued for a fixed 18 degrees/18degrees case for all over the globe-no less and no more. This, it seems, may not be the true situation either as there seems to be some room for geographical variability and perhaps 18 degrees serves as a good upper limit only"

Khalid Shaukat, www.moonsighting.com - "The phenomenon of subha sadiq will vary in degrees at different latitudes and different seasons because of the sun travelling along a specific latitude on a specific date. The sun travels between Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn in different seasons. People in different locations around the globe have made observations about subha sadiq and the results are anywhere between 13.5 degree and 18 degrees" also, "This does not agree with the observed phenomenon of Subha Sadiq or disappearance of Shafaq. Most places in the world do not follow 18 degrees. What they follow is 1 hour and 30 minutes. When checked out for suns position, it comes out about 18 degrees, only at latitudes near equator. **At high latitudes it varies quite a bit from 12 degrees to 18 degrees**"

Dr Mohammed Ilyas, Astronomy of Islamic Times for the Twenty First Century -

"We find that the flux decreases rapidly until about 16 degrees and then the change is rather small, although with an optical detector a small change such as the one between 16 and 18 degrees can be recorded, it may not make an appreciable difference to the human eye...besides the use of smaller values up to 16 degrees in certain middle east countries which we mentioned, preliminary results from a recent observation study also indicates this to be so".

So 18 degrees is not definite and the Ulama of the world also recognise this rendering it "zanni" not "qata'i". There is therefore no need to force 18 degrees down the throats of Muslims in the UK. It is but one method which is used for Isha and Fajr and mostly in tropical countries.

There is flexibility in the starting time of Subha. The light of subha is named Mustateer which means the spreading light. The spreading reaches a point when the light becomes distinct from the night. Some of the Sahaba Kiram continued eating suhoor until the sky was well lit whilst others stopped much early. This should be seen as a blessing not a burden. If the practise existed amongst the Sahaba Kiram Ajmaeen to differ why is it not possible for the Ulama of modern times to differ?

7. Observations around the world- They point to observations carried out all over the world which they say prove 18 degrees. However, many observations throughout the world have shown 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 degrees. This is one reason why the Ulama hesitate before deeming 18 degrees as "qat'i" i.e. definite.

Sheikh Al-Munajjid states:

"Note that the time for Fajr prayer begins when the second dawn starts, which is the white line that spreads horizontally along the horizon right and left. The time lasts until the sun rises. The first dawn is the false dawn, which is whiteness that appears vertically in the sky like

pillars. This happens approximately twenty minutes before true dawn, and it increases and decreases according to the season. From this explanation given by the Prophet SallallahuAlaihiWasallam, we know that the definition of the time of Fajr is based on observation, not on astronomical calculations or on timetables whose authors are unknown as far as their trustworthiness and knowledge are concerned, especially, if it is proven that they do not give correct times. This mistake does not occur only in Egypt, rather it seems that most of the timetables do not give the correct time of Fajar and are based on the false dawn i.e. Subha Kadhib. This means that there is the risk that the Muslims prayers are invalid, especially in the case of those who pray in their houses immediately after hearing the Adhaan". The Sheikh points out that a group of scholars and researchers in Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt and Sudan have attempted to find out the time of the true dawn. From that it became clear to them that the timetables in use at present are incorrect. The Sheikh urges Muslims to appoint groups of trustworthy scholars to determine the exact times for Fajar prayer and thus discard the use of the timetables that are currently incorrect.

www.islam-qa.com

Sheikh Al-Baani RA has found similar discrepancies in the times in Lebanon:

"I have seen that myself many times in my house, in the Hamlaan mountains to the South East of Amman, and that enables me to confirm what some of those who are keen that the Muslims worship should be correct have said, that the Adhaan of Fajar in some Arab countries is given 20-30 minutes before the time of the true dawn"

(Shaikh Al Baani, Al-Silsilah Al-Saheehah, 5/25)

Observations in Pakistan by Mufti Shafi' RA and Mufti Rashid Ahmed Ludhianvi RA received strong support from other prominent Ulama showing Subha Sadiq at about 15 degrees. This was later challenged by Professor Abdul Latiff who conducted his own observations with a group, and as a result of those observations Pakistan reverted back to the use of 18 degrees. (See also section above, "According to the critics 18 deg is the correct method").

When 15 deg was determined, Mufti Shafi' RA undertook observations with a team of eleven Ulama including Mufti Rashid Ahmed Ludhianvi RA in Tano Adam. Mufti Ludhianvi has recorded in his book "Subha Sadiq" that on June 12 they noticed some faint light at 4.00AM which they determined was similar to Subha Kadhib. Subha Sadiq itself was observed at 4.17AM. The observations were carried out during June 11-13 in 1970.

Mufti Ludhianvi RA issued a Fatwa based on these observations:

"The time of Subh Sadiq, given in the charts based on 18 degrees, and in common use in Karachi is **undoubtedly** not of the real Subha Sadiq. It is probably the time of Subh Kadhib, and given as an extreme precaution for the Muslims to stop Suhur in Ramadhan.....therefore the time given in these charts are incorrect. If Adhan is called at least 20 minutes later and Fajr Salat held after this, then it will be correct and valid in all seasons"

(Mufti Rashid Ahmed Ludhianvi, Subha Sadiq, Ahsanul Fatawa, Volume 2)

Mufti Ludhianvi also carried out further observations on 23 and 24 December 1971. Mufti Sab explains in graphic detail his observations which included the Milky Way Galaxy and the effect of the Surayya (Seven Stars constellation) on the night sky. Also observed was the

zodiacal light helping him to conclude that what may at first have been thought to be subha kadhif was not subha kadhif but the zodiacal light which Mufti Sab concurs are two separate and distinct phenomena.

In Ahsanul Fatawa Mufti Shafi' RA also ruled that the timetables in use in Pakistan based on 18 degrees appeared to be incorrect:

“This fact is **undisputable** that the use of 18 degrees in timetables for Subha Sadiq is not of the true Subha Sadiq but possibly of Subha Kadhif which is probably used for the end of fast due to safety reasons. After that time there is a period of time which is not always 21 minutes but varies in different seasons and different locations. Therefore those men and women who perform their Fajar prayer immediately after the 18 degree beginning time are wrong to do so. If azan is called after 20 minutes and Fajar performed after that, it will be acceptable to do so in all seasons.”

(Mufti Shafi' RA, Ahsanul Fatawa)

This was followed by the observations led by **Professor Latiff** who carried out nine observations in Pakistan between April 1973 and March 1975 accompanied by a minimum of three to a maximum of seventeen observers. This included Hazrat Mufti Rafi' Uthmani Sahib. Eight of these observations were in Pakistan whilst one was in Saudi Arabia. The first two observations were not actual observations but were observations to determine the correct location and therefore the practical observations were seven in total. Latiff's conclusion was that Subha Sadiq was much nearer to 18 Degrees and that the illumination at 15 Degrees was far greater. As a result, Mufti Rafi' Uthmani and others reverted to 18 deg but as they had previously observed Subha Sadiq at 15 deg, **they continued to apply caution with their Fajar prayer.**

Dr Omar Afzal Et Al are however highly critical of the assumptions made by A. Latiff in his book, Subha Sadiq Wa Subha Kazib, to back the use of 18 degrees and the apparent disregard of some of his own findings detailed within that book. Mufti Rashid Ludhianvi too rejects any claim that Subha Sadiq occurs at 18 degrees, either by Latiff or anyone else (Ahsanul Fatawa, Volume 2, Page 190). In support of 18 degrees Latiff quotes from the Farsi book “Bist Bab” by Nasiruddin Tusi (597-672 Hijri, 1201-1274 CE). Nasiruddin Tusi is famous for assisting Halaku Khan by capturing and killing Shaikh Ruhooddin and to destroy the Sunni Khilafat. He then became a close advisor and later Wazir of Halaku Khan and helped to capture Baghdad with the help of Alquami, the Shia Wazir of Baghdad from the last Sunni Wazir, the Abbasid Khalifa Musta-e-sim Billah.

Observations at USA- In the United States a team in Chicago found via observations made in 1985 that Subha Sadiq fell between 13 to 15 degrees. Other observations in the US show that it occurred a little earlier than even 12 degrees. Whilst other limited observations in Buffalo, Toronto, Montreal, San Francisco, Tempe, Houston, Washington DC confirm 13 to 15 degrees. In Eastern Australia observations have equated to 13/14 degrees.

Dr Omar Afzal in a recent email to a group debating the issue refers to global observations below 15 deg:

"Islam solves "difficult" life situations by opting for "convenience": La tushaad al-Deen...The beloved Prophet (PBUH) warned against making life difficult. We should learn from Sahaba ...who are reported to eat Suhur till almost the sun was going to come out.

We organized machine as well as human-eye "observations" at various points on earth from Chicago to Medina and Perth Australia to southern tip of Chile for the "Twilight." As a result, we are convinced Al-Hamdu-Lillah that even 15 degrees is too much. It may be further reduced to 13.2 degrees (and for UK 12 for some weeks). "

Omar Afzal, IslamicMoon

[\(Click for article on Fajar and Isha observations by Dr Omar Afzal\)](#)

8. "Raw" observations? - In their latest article, *Your fasting times are wrong*; their latest tactic is to refer to the Blackburn observations as "raw" observations. This is quite clever of them and results in confusing the reader who may think there is something required to make the so called "raw" observations become "ripe" (like a mango?). Is this what they did when they carried out observations in Preston? Did they find lower values and "ripened" them to 18 degrees? Why did they criticise the Blackburn observations for being in a heavily light polluted area when Preston is only ten miles away? Isn't 18 degrees highly convenient for the people who have always been against the Hizbul Ulama observations and supporters of 18 degrees? Don't forget these people are not just critical of the Hizbul Ulama UK timetable but they have been running an unrelenting campaign full of abuse and personal insults to rubbish the efforts of the Mo'tabar Ulama for many years. Were they psychologically swayed towards 18 degrees particularly due to their deep opposition to the Ulama of the Jamaats? How come when experts say that there is no appreciable difference to the naked eye between 15 and 18 degrees that they observe light at 18 degrees? Did they use optical instruments or did they have far superior eye sight than most ordinary people? How come they do not campaign against the use of 15 degrees which is also widespread in the UK? Why did they not find any fluctuations? Even Dr Robert Schaefer, worlds top twilight expert observed first light of dawn between 15 and 17 degrees in the States. In fact on one occasion he witnessed it at 13 degrees! This is an expert in twilight who knows exactly what to look for and has written extensively on this topic.

9. Molana Saleem Dhorat follows 18 degrees- They use names such as Molana Saleem Dhorat who has adopted 18 degrees. This is of course the prerogative of the Ulama but Molana Saleem Dhorat when he sent his question to Mufti Azam Mufti Rafi Uthmani Sahib displayed full confidence in the mushahadah.

Maulana Saleem Dhorat Sahib posed a series of questions to Hazrat Mufti Azam first by giving the context of Leicester where he said some Masjids used the mushahadah timetable when Maulana took over the running of Masjid Noor. After a great deal of discussion with the ulama especially with the respected Imam of Masjid Al Falah, Molana learnt that the times were based on *"the mushahadah of several mo'tabar ulama and supported by the ulama of Jamiat Ulama, Hizbul Ulama and Markazi Jamiat Ulama at a meeting attended by a countless number of Ulama and Muftiyane Kiram from the UK"*, and all the Masjids in Leicester adopted this timetable at the time. Later Jame Masjid and Masjid Bukhari shifted from this timetable and adopted 18 degrees.

Molana explains that he felt confident of the timetable of Masjid Noor and other Masjids based on the mushahadah and did not feel he needed to carry out any further investigations into the matter. He desired that there should be unity amongst all the Leicester Masjids and tried to seek unity by speaking to key people and realised that *'unity was not possible after reflecting on the conditions at the time.'* Maulana Saleem Sahib goes on to say that nevertheless Masjid Noor continued on the mushahadah timetable with full yaqeen that on this Ijtihadi mas'ala Masjid Noor was on the path of Haq. Molana Yaqub Qasmi too, he says, tried to draw attention to this issue in a pamphlet, however due to the yaqeen and confidence in the mushahadah timetable his attention was not drawn towards that especially as the Masjids within the locality were all following the mushahadah timetable. It was not until returning from a visit abroad when attention was again drawn to Molana Yaqub Qasmi's advice to follow 18 degrees. Masjid Noor agreed to consider 18 degrees and Molana sought Fatwa from Mufti Rafi' Uthmani Sahib MZT. Now looking at the context in which Molana Saleem made the decision is it possible that he would condemn the mushahadah timetable? No, this is not possible, and **at no time to my knowledge has Molana Saleem condemned the use of the Mushahadah timetable.**

They also point to places like Batley and Dewsbury which did not adopt the timetable. This is because some towns were not represented at the gathering of the Ulama in Blackburn such as Batley and Dewsbury, hence Batley and Dewsbury did not adopt the mushahadah timetable.

Remember, the Muftiyane Kirams have ruled that the use of degrees is "Zanni" not "qata'i", and this is for three reasons, one, mushahadah has precedence over degrees, two, because observations around the world have differed in their results and, three, because there are differences amongst the experts on this issue.

10. Did Hazrat Thanvi RA advocate 18 degrees?- It is assumed that Hazrat advocated the use of 18 degrees on the basis that he, in responding to an enquirer from Scotland, sent a chart showing 18 degrees. A careful study of Molana Thanvi's works on this subject show that Molana preferred Mushahadah and did not advocate the use of degrees. Molana's initial response to the questioner was to carry out a Mushahadah. When the questioner responded by saying it was difficult to carry out Mushahadah in Britain (Imdadul Fatawa Volume 1 P115) that Molana asked the Munjim to respond by preparing a chart and the Munjim sent a chart based on Astronomical Twilight from the Almanac. The record does not explicitly suggest that Hazrat himself instructed the Munjim to use 18 degrees. A careful study of Hazrat's writings suggests that he equated 18 degrees to Subha Kadhif and not Subha Sadiq as illustrated in Imdadul Ahkam Volume 1 Page 415, "...the time gap between sun set and setting of shafaq abyadh is the same as *the time gap between subha kadhif (18 degrees) and sun rise*". Here, Hazrat refers to subha kadhif as 18 degrees so clearly he did not believe subha sadiq to be at 18 degrees and this was based on careful mushahadah as Hazrat preferred determining times derived through mushahadah.

Molana Zafar Ahmad Usmani RA wrote to a questioner: "I took the matter to Hadhrat. Finally it is decided that the time span between sunset and the setting time of white shafaq will be the same as the time span between **sunrise time and subha kadhif, meaning 18 degrees**" At the end of the Fatwa Hazrat wrote: "Because this answer is written with my involvement and advice, therefore, I am in full agreement with the context" (Imaddul Ahkam, V1, Page 416). So it is clear that Hazrat equated 18 degrees to Subha Kadhif and not Subha Sadiq.

(For further details on this see *Bartaniya Me Isha Ka Sahih Waqt* (Urdu) by Y.A.Miftahi on the website).

Mufti Rashid Ahmed Ludhyanvi RA has also said similarly, "From experience I came to know that **Subha Kadhīb** starts and shafaq ends when the sun is depressed by 18 degrees below the horizon". (Tasrih, page 69)

11. 18 degrees widely used in tropical countries like Indian sub continent and Middle East- The historical legacy of the use of solar depression levels which culminated in finally settling on 18 degrees emanated from the Islamic medieval period when Islamic astronomy was at its peak, although according to Professor David King the masses did not use the timetable charts prepared by Muslim astronomers but used folk astronomy to determine the correct times. The wide use of 18 degrees in these countries does not necessarily make 18 degrees automatically correct for all locations and all seasons. It is possible for instance that the Muslim astronomers were wrong or that their findings do not apply to the countries Muslims settled in during recent years e.g. Northern Europe and North America. We also know that even during the height of Muslim knowledge on astronomy, famous Muslim astronomers differed in the level at which twilight should be set for the Fajar and Isha Salats from 15-20 degrees. 18 degrees is a legacy from the medieval period which when combined with modern day astronomical knowledge which suggests there is no trace of light at 18 degrees, 18 degrees became a compelling solar depression angle in the Indian Sub Continent and Middle East. However modern day scrutiny by Muslim experts and engagement with observatories shows that the use of 18 degrees is not conclusive.

Professor Ilyas refers to the legacy of 18 degrees in his book, "Astronomy of Islamic Times for the Twenty First Century":

"The remarkable medieval achievements in mathematical astronomy mark the highpoints of Islamic astronomy, from which, it seems, Islamic astronomy began to slide downwards, reaching the level of mere copying by the early 20th century due to lack of scientific competence.....the situation gradually went from bad to worse, as Muslims continued to use old variables for new locations without any of the necessary research work being initiated.....The data on astronomical twilight for 18 degrees depression became standard for the night (Isha) and morning (Fajr) prayers as a close approximation in the absence of any proper work and guidance.this parameter indeed presents a serious scientific challenge to modern researchers. Overall, a confused situation has prevailed"

12. Difference in twilight length in Subha and Isha- One of the criticisms directed by critics of the Mushahadah of Hizbul Ulama UK is why does the Mushahadah of Hizbul Ulama UK produce differences in the time length of Subha Sadiq and Isha? They say that the Ulama have said the time length is equal. What they fail to say is that the Ulama caveat this by saying this is "zanni", not "qata'i". This is clearly written in Mufti Rafi Uthmani's Fatwa in Nawdirul Fiqh.

Critics use this point to nullify the Mushahadah and question the integrity of the Ulama who carried out the Mushahadah. The simple answer to critics is that had we based our setting of Isha time on the assumption that the time length would be equal, the criticism would not have arisen. All we needed to do is to observe Subha Sadiq only and apply the time length determined from Subha Sadiq to sunrise, to that of sunset to determine the time for Isha. This

would have made life easier for the observers. We however, chose to carry out a full Mushahadah and test that assumption. In doing so we found a variation in the time length between the two prayers. At first we could not answer the assumed anomaly but further research into why there is this variation made it much clearer to us and increased our understanding and challenged the belief that what may be technically true is not necessarily true also in reality. Look how Allah, the Wise, increases the depth of knowledge of those who seek the truth!

“One important thing however, is that the eye is completely rested in the morning and sees the light intensity increase continuously, so that it is more sensitive to dawn phenomena than to dusk phenomena. The latter have generally a greater richness of colour on account of the greater humidity of the air, and because the air is a little more turbulent and contains more particles of dust than in the morning”,

(M Minnaert, Light and Color in the Outdoors)

“Another factor which may be of some importance in determining the Isha and Fajr times is the asymmetry in thermal and light conditions between evening and morning times. During the early morning, we deal with an environment which is cooler and has greater stability and the eye must be considerably adapted to much lower flux conditions when trying to detect an increasing flux. In the evening case, not only will the environment be warmer and less stable, but the eye may not be so well adapted and it will be attempting to detect a decreasing light flux. “,

(Dr Mohammed Ilyas, Astronomy of Islamic Times for the Twenty First Century)

Conclusion

All the Ulama and Fuqaha agree that mushahadah is the true basis of prayer times. However, where we can be confident that observatory times do not conflict with this principle it is permissible to use observatory times. This is done for sunrise, sunset and Asar as these times can be easily verified by observations.

When it comes to Fajar and Isha times, it is a different story. No observatory in the world has ever advised that Subha Sadiq and Isha is at 18, or 15 or whatever degrees. There is considerable debate between the use of 15 and 18 degrees. In fact the only issue the experts are united on is that 18 degrees is the upper limit at which there is no trace of light left in the sky. Twilight is not easily defined by the observatories and dawn and dusk definitions too do not always correspond to Islamic definitions of Subha and Shafaq. Hence no observatory has advised conclusively on the use of degrees.

“....neither the RGO nor HMNAO have ever sought to determine how phenomena such as the appearance of twilight and the visibility of the new crescent moon should be used for religious purposes. Our role has solely been to disseminate this information for use by the Islamic and other communities. One point I did notice was your reference to “dawn” and “dusk”. These are not clearly defined so are not included in the data provided by HMNAO”.

(Dr Robert Massey, HM Nautical Almanac Office)

“There is no precise definition of “dawn”. If it is interpreted as the time of “first light”, dawn corresponds to a depression between 18 and 12 degrees but it is not possible to be more precise”.

(RGO Astronomical Information Sheet No. 7, by Yallop & Hohenkerk)

My advice to any dissenting Ulama is for them to place their trust in the sincerity with which the Ulama carried out the Mushahadah. All that the Deen requires are simplicity, ease, constancy and unity. What they need to ponder is why would a group of Ulama risk shouldering the burden of responsibility for the Salat and Sawm of millions of Muslims? The Mushahadah chart approved by the Ulama of UK in 1989 provides a basis for unity and is based on a fundamental desire to correct our Salat timings. The Mushahadah carried out was done with a great deal of sacrifice on the part of those who participated in this noble and worthy task. May Allah Subhanahuwata’ala grant his full pleasure to those who strove to rectify the Salat and Sawm of the Muslims in the U.K., and protect their families and descendents from all harm and the clutches of shaytan. Aameen.

Our most sincere advice to worried Muslims is to ignore the advice of this group who appear to have an anti Jamaat agenda (ie HU, JU and MJU) and who are out to create dissension and fitnah amongst the Muslim community, despite knowing full well that their method is “zanni” not “qat’i” and that the Senior Ulama are clearly allowing flexibility and urging caution against saying others are wrong. Insha Allah your fast and prayers will be accepted.

وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ

“....over all endowed with knowledge is one, the All-Knowing”

(Holy Quran, 12: 76)

*Y.A.Miftahi,
19 August 2011/19 Ramadan 1432*



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