

Introduction

“Introduction to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community”

By Falahud Din Shams

In the 19th century, Islam as a religion and Muslims as a nation were helpless. Muslim empires were crumbling all over the world. In the subcontinent of India, the Mughal Empire was brought down by the British. Islam was being attacked by all other faiths in such a manner that it was an obvious degradation. Muslims had not experienced such humiliation in 1,300 years of their existence. At one point it was estimated that there were 70,000 Christian missionaries actively working in British India. Even some of the educated scholars of Islam were being converted to Christianity and in turn were converting their congregations to Christianity. There was no one to defend Islam and it manifested in the general helplessness and depressed feelings among the Muslim masses. In 19th century literature, prose and poetry, the Muslim nation was referred to as “Ummat marhooma” meaning the “deceased nation”. This pathetic situation was not limited to a particular area. The same situation existed with the Muslims of British India, in the Middle East or any other region of the world. Even many Muslims thought that the end of Islam was near and there was nothing that could change this phenomenon.

Founder of Ahmadiyya Community

In 1835, a person was born by the name of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in the village of Qadian. God was to appoint him in the defense of Islam. He wrote a book Braheen-e-Ahmadiyya and declared that the only living religion is Islam and the only living prophet is Prophet Muhammad. He challenged all religious scholars of all faiths to debate him.

His announcement was unique because he stated that he has received revelation from God and that he is the Messiah and Mahdi that people were anticipating for several centuries. His argument was that revelation and prophethood can only be achieved by following a living religion and a living prophet. Since other religions cannot and have not produced any person who receives revelation, therefore, their religion cannot be a living one.

He announced this very argument in the following words:

“The recognition of the Living God we have achieved through this Perfect Prophet and through his light. The honor of converse with God, through which we behold His countenance, has been bestowed upon me through this great Prophet. The ray of this sun of guidance falls like sunshine upon me and I continue illumined only so long as I am adjusted towards it”

[Haqiqat-ul-Wahi, (Qadian, Magazine Press 1907); Now published in Roohani Khazaanah (London, 1984), Vol. 22, pp. 115-116].

He openly and clearly declared that his status in the Eyes of God was only achieved by following the Holy Prophet Muhammad. He states this in the following quote:

“It would not have been possible for me to have attained this grace if I had not followed the footsteps of my lord and master, the pride of all the prophets, the best of man-kind, Muhammad, the chosen one, peace and blessings of Allah be on him. Whatever I have achieved, I have achieved by following him, and I know from verified reliable experience that no man can reach God and obtain a deeper understanding of His ways without following that Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be on him.” (Roohani Khazaanah, Vol. 22: Haqiqat-ul-Wahi, pp. 64-65)

Belief about Jesus

Because of his claim of being the 2nd Messiah, the question arose as to the belief among Christians and Muslims about Jesus son of Mary coming back to the world.

The founder of the Ahmadiyya Community announced that Jesus did not die on the cross because it would have been a disgraceful death. Since Jesus son of Mary was a pure and innocent prophet of God, He saved him from the death on the cross. He explained that the real mission of Jesus was to preach the lost sheep of the house of Israel who were scattered in many countries. He established by arguments and reasoning from the gospels as well as from the history that Jesus traveled to other countries and eventually settled in Kashmir, India. He also announced that the tomb of Jesus is in Srinagar, Kashmir on Khanyar Street. He announced that Jesus would not be coming down from the skies. Hadhrat Ahmad claimed and proved that all the prophecies whether in the New Testament or in the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad were fulfilled in his person.

Hadhrat Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, restored dignity to the status of Jesus. The Scriptures says that anyone who hangeth on the tree is accursed of God. When someone is accursed, it means that he becomes an enemy of God and God becomes his enemy. That is the reason

Satan is referred to as accursed. Ahmad refuted any thought that he was in any way insulting Jesus. Instead he was describing the real status of Jesus, a prophet who taught worship of one God and fulfilled his mission of preaching to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He stated his real feelings about Jesus:

“In Mosaic dispensation the Son

of Mary was the Promised Messiah and in the Islamic

Dispensation I am the Promised

Mes-siah; so I honor greatly the one whose name I bear. Anyone who asserts that I do not hold Jesus son of Mary in high es-teem is a mischief-maker and a liar. I honor not only Jesus son of Mary but also his four brothers, as they were all sons of the same mother. I also regard his two real sis-ters as holy, for they are all the children of Holy Mary.”

[Kashti-e-Nuh, Roohani Khaza’in, vol. 19, pp. 17-18]

Message of the Founder

It is remarkable to note that this claim and voice were raised in the small village of Qadian. There was no post office, no bus stop, no train station, telegraph or telephone service. Amazingly, this voice was heard throughout the world, even in the United States of America. Guests started arriving to visit him from all over the world. This was the fulfillment of the prophecy “wherever the carcass is, eagles shall gather together.” In a short time Qadian was full of life and activity. Young people started to devote their lives and become missionaries. It was an unheard concept of Muslim missionaries to go any-where to challenge other faiths. They were taking trains; embarking upon the decks of ships and even walking to the far away lands of Africa, Middle East, Europe and America. They were giving the glad tid-ings that the Messiah, the Prince of peace, had come and peace is at hand for man-kind.

Community’s Birth

Officially, the Ahmadiyya Community was established in March 1889. Hadhrat Ahmad announced his purpose and mis-sion in the following words:

“God almighty has raised me, a humble servant, in this age so that the Islamic teachings may be published and propa-gated to all nations and all countries and thus leave no excuse for them. For this purpose God has provided me with hun-dreds of heavenly signs, knowledge about the hidden things, sciences, facts and I have been provided with hundreds of logi-cal arguments. God Almighty has pro-vided for me the means and methods of publicizing the religion, the arguments and proofs to an extent that no other na-tion in history was equipped with these blessings. All of the hidden opportunities that have been provided to me were not given to any one of them. These are the blessings of Allah and He gives it to whomever He chooses.” (Braheen-e-Ahmadiyya page 575)

Name of the Community

The name of the community “Ah-madiyya” was chosen by its founder for a very specific reason. Many people may think that the name is used because the name of its founder was Ahmad but this is not the case.

Holy Prophet Muhammad had two names: Muhammad and Ahmad. The name Muhammad reflected his majestic at-tributes

and Ahmad referred to his attributes of peace and harmony. When the Holy Prophet declared God's message, his first thirteen years of life in Mecca was a reflection of the name Ahmad. He was persecuted; the Meccans punished his followers in diverse ways. His response was of peace and harmony and he showed patience and perseverance. His life in Medina of ten years was the reflection of his name Muhammad when he defeated his enemies and finally became victorious and God established his majestic attributes.

The attribute of the name Ahmad would also be revived in the latter days according to the prophecies. This reason for choosing the name of the community was clearly stated by its founder:

"There was a prophecy that the name Ahmad would be manifested again in the latter days and that a person would appear through whom the qualities of beauty, which characterized Ahmad, would be manifested, and all fighting would come to an end. For this reason, it has been considered appropriate that the name of this sect should be the Ahmadiyya Sect, so that everyone hearing this name should realize that this sect has come into being for the spread of peace and harmony and that it would have nothing to do with war and fighting."

[Majma'ah Ishtiharat, vol. 3, pp. 364-366]

Highlights of Beliefs

Emphasizing where it says in the Holy Qur'an "there is no compulsion in religion," he explained that Jihad of the sword is applicable, as a defensive measure in very strictly defined conditions and those conditions do not exist today. Therefore, our interaction with other faiths has to be through discussions, dialogue and exchange of ideas. Instead, he declared a Jihad of the pen against all religions and forces who were trying to destroy Islam.

He also taught the community to show patience in face of persecution. Just as Jesus was put on the cross for preaching peace and humility, the followers of the 2nd Messiah faced the same circumstances. They showed humility, perseverance and patience and in turn prayed for their enemies. Whether it be in Pakistan, Bangladesh or Indonesia, the example of this characteristic of the Ahmadiyya Community is manifestly clear.

Success of the Founder

The founder of the community was successful single handedly defending Islam and restoring its dignity. Upon his passing away one of the Indian Muslim leaders Maulana Abul Kalam Azaad wrote the following that is a testament to his success. Referring to the literature produced by Hadhrat Ahmad, he wrote:

"This service rendered by Mirza Sahib will place the coming generations under the debt of gratitude in that he fulfilled his duty of the defense of Islam by joining the front rank of those engaged in Jihad by the pen and he left behind him as a memorial such literature as will last so long as Muslims have blood flowing in their veins

and the urge to support Islam remains their prominent national characteristic.”
Vakeel, Amritsar May 1908

Second Manifestation

In 1908, when Hazrat Ahmad passed away, another phenomena took place that the world had only experienced at the pass-ing away of other great prophets in history. The system of Khilafat was established in Ahmadiyya Community. God has promised in the Holy Quran:

“Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do good works that He will surely make them Successors in the earth, as He made Successors from among those before them”.
(24:56)

According to this verse of the Holy Quran, God establishes Khilafat in the com-munity because He considers it to be con-sisting of believers and people who do good works. No other community has Khilafat among them based on the revelation re-ceived by a prophet. Under this system the Khalifa is elected through voting proce-dures but it is not a position that anyone desires. No one runs for this position or runs a campaign. If anyone does that, it dis-qualifies him just on this basis. So there is no payback after one is elected. The voters discharge their trust given to them by God. It is not a favor to one they are voting for. If they vote for someone not deserving in their opinion, then they are answerable to God for their mistreatment of the trust.

System of Love and Authority

It is through this system of Khilafat that Ahmadiyya Community is established in 190 countries. It is established across geographi-cal, racial and national boundaries. It is giv-ing the message to humans of love and in-vites them to be one community under one religion and one prophet, the Holy Prophet Muhammad. All the prophecies in Islam and Christianity point to Messiah in the latter days who would gather all humanity under one banner and establish paradise on earth.

The progress of the Community is under the system of Khilafat, which is of love and authority. Every member of the Community has access and contact with the Khalifa and is voluntarily obedient to him. No army, no police is kept to enforce this relationship. It is based on love for anyone to choose if they so wish. It is under this system that the Community makes financial sacrifices in the way of God and all its work is done without any aid from any government.

Throughout the last 100 years, not a single terrorist has evolved from this Com-munity, in any part of the world, because of its teachings of peace and humility. On the other hand, it has produced a person Chaudhry Zafrullah Khan who became the president of General Assembly of United Nations and also Chief Justice of the Inter-national Court of Justice in Hague, Dr. Abdus Sallam who was the first Muslim to receive the Nobel Prize in Physics and thou-sands of other leaders in their respective fields.

How to Recognize the True Messiah?

Jesus gave instructions as to how you will know when the true claimant showed up in the latter days. Jesus clearly explained that false prophets would be known by their fruits. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." (Matthew 7:15-19)

If every prophet in the future were to be false, there would not have been any need to set such a standard.

Love for All, Hatred for None

Ahmadiyya community today reflects the teachings of Prophet Muhammad through the 2nd Messiah, emphasizing the commandments of love and compassion.

We hear beautiful teachings in the Mosques and churches such as: "Love thy enemy". What does it really mean and where and how is it practiced? For most people it is a good slogan, makes them feel good but has no practical implication. The community of the 2nd Messiah is the one that has put it into practice.

An incident took place a day before the devastating earthquake occurred in the northwestern Pakistan a few years ago. In the small village of Moong in Pakistan, a few members of the Ahmadiyya Community were in their mosque before sunrise performing their morning prayer. Some individuals came riding on motor-cycles and showers bullets at them and fled away. The floor of the mosque was full of blood and bodies of the dead and injured. Among the innocent who lost their lives that day were young, old and children. Since it was a small community, everyone was related to each other so every house was in mourning. Some lost their father, uncle, son or cousin. Even for Pakistan it was a gruesome crime against humanity. These were peaceful poor people who were not involved in activities that could possibly be used as an excuse for this kind of action.

It was such a shocking cold-blooded murder that even the conscience of the Government of Pakistan was shaken. Although persecution and discrimination based on religion takes place all over the world, in Pakistan it takes place under the law with the full support of its constitution, courts and the police. So to affect its conscience is a rare occurrence. The government decided to send one of their high official with large checks for each family affected in the village. The checks were for hundreds of thousands of rupees. Under the TV cameras running and the news reporters all around, the official offered these checks to the relatives of the deceased. However, the official got the shock of his life. The members of this community said that God will take care of them and they would like all this money to be donated to the victims of the earthquake in northwest Pakistan.

The area where the earthquake took place was centered in the city of Muzaffar Abad. It is the city where the opposition and persecution against Ahmadis started long time ago. The very first resolution in 1974 by a Provincial Assembly to declare Ahmadiyya community as Non-Muslim was in that city. Slowly over the years, Ahmadis moved

away from that area because of the persecution. That was one reason that Members of Ahmadiyya community were safe from the earthquake.

This is how you love your enemies.

The very people who persecuted and showed their animosity were the recipient of gift when they needed it. This is the teaching of the Messiah in practice: “Love thy enemy.”

Invitation to All

We invite all of you to come and taste this fruit and find for yourself that it will give you life and a spiritual uplift. You will find the practical application of the teachings of peace, mercy and compassion. By following the Messiah of the latter days, you could achieve the spiritual status so much so that every morning of your life would bear witness that you spent the night righteously and every evening of your life would bear witness that you spent the day in fear of God, making sure that none of His commandments were broken.

We hope and pray that the day will come soon when all of humanity would get together under one banner and we would have not just one country but the whole world as ‘one nation under God’ and everyone would not just sing but actually practice the slogan: “Love for all, hatred for none.”