

A Message of Peace and Harmony

Founding of Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore in 1914

by Zahid Aziz¹

“And Allah invites to the abode of peace, and guides whom He pleases to the right path.” — The Holy Quran, 10: 25

About one year before the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam was founded at Lahore, some of its founding members launched a newspaper from Lahore in July 1913 with the title *Paigham Sulh* or the Message of Peace. After the Anjuman was established in 1914, it became its Urdu organ, and has remained so since then. Its first issue is dated 10th July 1913, and it was named after the last booklet of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, called *Paigham Sulh*, which was delivered as a public lecture in June 1908, about a month after his death. In the first issue, on the front page, the first article is an extract from the beginning of his lecture *Paigham Sulh* and it is stated above this article that:

“This newspaper has been started to revive the memory of his last writing”

and that this extract is being quoted so that the public may easily assess:

“what kind of principles and ideas we wish to promote in fulfilling the aims of our holy Imam”.

The lecture *Paigham Sulh*

The main purpose of the lecture *Paigham Sulh* by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was to put forward proposals whereby Muslims and Hindus in India could live together in peace, harmony and mutual sympathy. However, the principles that he has drawn attention to are of a general nature, and show how Muslims and other communities can live together in peace. He writes in this extract:

“My dear countrymen, that religion is no religion which does not inculcate broad sympathy, nor does that man deserve to be called man who does not have a sympathetic soul within him. Our God has not withheld His bounty from any people. He has bestowed the blessings of nature on all nations, whether Indians, Arabs, Persians, Syrians, Chinese, Japanese, Europeans or

¹ This is the English version of the speech delivered by Zahid Aziz in Urdu at the annual gathering of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore at Lahore in December 2013. This English version was also delivered at a meeting of Lahore Ahmadiyya organizations at the Hague, Holland, on 11 May 2014.

Americans. For all of them, the earth of God serves as a floor, and for all of them His sun, moon, and stars give light, and also perform other functions. All of them derive benefit from the air, water, fire, earth and other things created by God, and all of them use the produce of the earth, its corn and its herbs, its flowers and its fruits. These liberal ways of God teach us that we also should do good to all mankind, and should not be narrow-minded, nor limit our sympathy.”

In this writing, in 1908, he has mentioned a kind of United Nations in the words “Indians, Arabs, Persians, Syrians, Chinese, Japanese, Europeans, Americans”, long before such a body was created by the countries of the world. It is from the Quran that he derives this concept of God treating all nations as equal without discrimination, as he goes on to explain:

“The Holy Quran opens with the very verse which teaches this broad doctrine: ‘Praise be to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds’ (1:1). The ‘worlds’ include all the different peoples, different ages, and different countries. Opening the Holy Quran with this verse, which embodies such breadth of view, is a reply to those nations who limit, each to itself, the universal bounty and providence of God, and regard other peoples as though they were not a creation of God, or as though, having once been created, they have since been completely forsaken and forgotten by Him.”

Now contrast this noble concept with the attitudes prevailing in the Muslim world of today, where in one country a court has ruled that non-Muslims are not allowed to use the word Allah for the name of God. It means that the authorities of that Muslim country are claiming to possess copyright over the name Allah.

It was due to this teaching of sympathy for all human beings that he strongly rejected the misguided concept of *jihad* as being the teaching that a Muslim should kill a non-Muslim. He writes in his book entitled *The British Government and Jihad*:

“Anyone who has eyes and reads the narrations in Hadith and looks at the Quran will realize it quite well that this form of jihad which many savage-like people are pursuing is not the jihad taught by Islam. In fact, these are criminal acts which are done through the arousal of base passions or in the vain hope of attaining paradise.... The ignorant religious leaders, may God guide them, have greatly deceived the masses and declared acts of brutality, cruelty and inhumanity to be the key to attaining paradise. Can it be a virtuous deed that there is a man going about in the market place, we have

no connection with him so much so that we do not know his name and he does not know our name, but despite this we fire a gunshot at him intending to kill him? Is this religious behaviour?” (1st Urdu edition, pp. 8–11)

Then, mentioning the example set by the Holy Prophet Muhammad and his companions during his life at Makkah, he writes:

“It is regrettable that Muslims, especially Muslim clerics, have ignored all these events. ... They have not learnt even a word from the lesson of human sympathy. Rather, opening fire with a pistol or gun on an unmindful person for no fault of his is considered an Islamic act....

Can such a religion be from God which teaches that if you go on wantonly murdering innocent, guiltless people, who have not even been preached the message of Islam, you will enter Paradise?” (pp. 11-12)

These words portray a picture of the events that happen around the world in the name of Islam. Muslims themselves are bringing Islam into the worst kind of disrepute. What is more, the perpetrators of these acts, and their leaders, remain unsuccessful in their declared objectives. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad once wrote a poem reminding Muslims that they simply do not have the capability of waging or winning a jihad of war. He writes that Muslims have lost all those qualities which made the early Muslims successful in war. The secret in this, he says, is that Muslims no longer have any need to fight for their religion by means of the sword. In *The British Government and Jihad* he issued the following instruction to his followers:

“Those who join my army, I order them to give up these misconceived ideas of jihad with the sword, and to purify their hearts, develop and nurture their feelings of mercy towards all humankind and be helpers of those in distress and suffering. They should spread peace on the earth, as this is how their religion will spread.” (p. 15)

How will their religion spread? Firstly, it will spread because they will possess the qualities mentioned above, be models of the best behaviour before the world, and work to create conditions of peace on earth, and not disorder and strife. As he also stresses in this book: “For the sake of God, have mercy on everyone, so that from heaven mercy may be had on you ... give up all petty hatred and envy, and become sympathisers of all humanity” (p. 14).

There is another factor too which will be vital in the spread of Islam. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad explains that as God has created the most extraordinary modern

inventions of the present times to meet the physical needs of man, similarly He will meet the spiritual needs of mankind by causing the light and the message of truth to spread far and wide by means of these very ways of communication and transport.

He writes in *The British Government and Jihad*:

“On earth, there is a flood of physical blessings providing you with conveniences, whether you are travelling or staying at home and in every matter, which your forefathers never knew. It is as if it is a new world. Out of season fruits are available, six months’ journey can be performed in a few days, news from thousands of miles is received in an instant, machines and devices are available for conveniently performing every task. ... Thus, when a wondrous revolution has occurred in the world, Almighty God desires that a wonderful revolution occurs in the Heavens too.” (pp. 16–17)

“God has provided all the resources on the earth such as the railways, telegraph and steamboats, and good administration of mail and easy means of travel and journeying have been perfectly implemented. All these have been provided so that the Divine promise is fulfilled that the invitation of the Promised Messiah will enlighten every corner of the world like lightening.” (p. 16)

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad wrote this at a time when the general Muslim clerics used to declare the use of modern inventions as unlawful for religious purposes, particularly because the inventions were the work of non-Muslims. Initially they even rejected the use of the printing press for religious purposes, or photography for acquiring knowledge. But today all Muslims embrace, endorse and enthusiastically use the latest means of communication and transport even for religious purposes.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has mentioned that these modern means will enable his message of Islam to penetrate to even the furthest places in the world as well as to reach everywhere speedily. But now, a hundred years later, further developments have allowed us to overcome a great obstacle. There are certain organizations today who spread false propaganda against him and his mission and try to prevent his true message from reaching people. But due to the modern ways of electronic communication, people can easily access his message, and they can then judge for themselves whether his opponents are right or if he is right. Muslims who are prevented from coming to our centres, or obtaining our traditionally printed books, can watch our meetings and easily access our literature on their computers.

However, what is most important is not the mere use of modern technology to preach the message of Islam in the world, but the content of that message. Today we find that in non-Muslim countries, especially western countries, no responsible Muslim individual or organization teaches that wrong concept of jihad which Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad corrected. Whether willingly or unwillingly, they present more or less the same standpoint on jihad, and the same approach on how Muslims should live peacefully as law-abiding citizens of a non-Muslim country, that the Ahmadiyya Movement has been presenting for more than a hundred years. It is the teachings of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad that make it possible for Muslims to live under non-Muslim rule and, at the same time, present their religion to others without feeling embarrassment about it.

I now come to the scurrilous writings and abusive comments directed against Islam and the Holy Prophet Muhammad that are published in Western countries from time to time. Such writings also used to be published in the time of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and were circulated in countries where Muslims lived, such as India. He urged Muslims to make a compilation of all allegations contained in these books and produce a comprehensive reply. He opposed calls for banning any particular book because these allegations had become widespread and were not confined to certain books only. He wrote that even if the author of an abusive book is punished by law, and his book is banned, the poisonous effect of his accusations against Islam has entered into the hearts of many people. When Muslims merely protest about such publications, or make violent threats against the authors, this does not answer their criticism, and in fact it only brings Islam into further disrepute. But by refuting their objections against Islam, we can convince all right-minded people that this criticism is false and malicious, and thus we can isolate the perpetrators as twisted-minded extremists who can be ignored.

In connection with the issue of Muslims living with other people of the world, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad did not merely teach that Islam does not allow Muslims to conduct a jihad of violence and physical fighting against non-Muslims. Going further than this negative approach, he emphasised, as he did in his lecture *Paigham Sulh*, the fundamental teaching given by Islam that God is the Lord of all the worlds, not only the Lord of Muslims, and that this is why He raised prophets among all nations, in whom Muslims are required to believe. It was to complete the teachings of all these prophets that, after all of them, He sent one Prophet and one Book for the whole world, that is, the Holy Prophet Muhammad and the Holy Quran. This Movement conveys to followers of other religions the message which is contained in the Quran in the following words: “We believe in what has been revealed to us and

revealed to you, and our God and your God is One” (29:46), and “Allah is our Lord and your Lord. For us are our deeds, and for you your deeds” (42:15).

The Message of Peace which the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement presents is not only directed at other religions, but a very important aspect of it concerns relations between Muslims. It is a fundamental, distinctive and identifying belief of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore that all those who proclaim the *Kalima* of Islam as their creed, and call themselves Muslims, are to be treated as Muslims, and it is a most serious sin to declare any such people as outside the fold of Islam because we disagree with them on some interpretation of Islam. It was to uphold this standpoint that, one hundred years ago, in 1914, the founding members of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore refused to continue under the Qadiani Jamaat leadership and formed this organization in Lahore. They could not accept the Qadiani Jamaat doctrine that a person must accept Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet of God, otherwise that person is a non-Muslim and outside the fold of Islam. The Lahore Ahmadiyya Anjuman put forward a vast amount of irrefutable evidence from the Quran, Hadith and Islamic law, to prove that a person who accepts the *Kalima* is a Muslim and cannot be expelled from Islam. They also proved that this was also the belief of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. The Qadiani Jamaat, from whom they separated on this issue, eventually had to stop calling other Muslims as *kafir*, and for the past 60 years they have been claiming that they consider other Muslims as Muslims. This has set the final seal on the correctness of the stand taken by our elders in 1914, that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had never called other Muslims as excluded from Islam.

Muslims in general too are now realising that great damage has been done to their entire community by the bad practice of various sects calling each other as *kafir*. In Pakistan, sectarian strife among Muslims is leading to violence and killings as a daily occurrence. The only solution is to adopt that teaching of Islam which has been presented and practised in this age by the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement for one century, namely, that a Muslim must regard and treat all other Muslims as his brethren, while still maintaining his allegiance to any particular group that he wishes to be associated with.

The other key belief upon which the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat was founded in 1914, by differing with the Qadiani Jamaat, is that after the Holy Prophet Muhammad no prophet can come, neither a new one nor one from the past. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has written that every prophet required people to accept him by acknowledging his own *Kalima*, “God is One and I am His Messenger”, and that

this entire *Umma* has been taught the summary of its religion in the words “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger” (*Haqiqat-ul-Wahy*, p. 111). If the Qadiani Jamaat now acknowledge that anyone who believes in this *Kalima* is a Muslim, then they cannot maintain that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was a prophet because as a prophet he would have invited people to his own *kalima*.

As regards the opponents of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, while they condemn him for claiming to be a prophet, they themselves believe, or at least allow Muslims to believe, that the prophet Jesus will return to this world as leader of the Muslims at some future time. But when in Pakistan in September 1974 the national legislature declared Ahmadis as non-Muslims for believing in Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, whether as prophet or as *Mujaddid*, they forgot this belief about the return of Jesus. In their definition of ‘Muslim’ they wrote that a Muslim must, firstly, believe in “the absolute and unqualified finality of the Prophethood of Muhammad (Peace be upon him), the last of the Prophets”. But the only people who believe in the *absolute and unqualified* finality of the Prophethood are Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat. Those who believe that Jesus will return do not believe in the *absolute and unqualified* finality of the Prophethood because they qualify their belief in finality by saying that one particular prophet from the past can still come.

In their definition of ‘Muslim’ there is a second part. It states that a Muslim must not believe in “any person who claimed or claims to be a prophet in any sense of the word or of any description whatsoever after Muhammad (Peace be upon him)” to be a prophet or religious reformer. But if Jesus returns, he would at least have to claim that he is that same Jesus who was a prophet mentioned in the Quran. Therefore he would definitely be calling himself a prophet in some sense of the word.

This definition is so absurd that those who devised it themselves become non-Muslims under both parts of it.

To conclude, Islam as presented by the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha‘at Islam Lahore is soundly based on the Quran and the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The passing of one hundred years since the formation of this organization has proved beyond doubt that its interpretation of Islam is the one which can bring peace and harmony between Muslims and non-Muslims, and among Muslims themselves.

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