

1. Introducing the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement

The *Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha‘at Islam* (Ahmadiyya Association for the propagation of Islam) founded in Lahore, Pakistan, in 1914 is an international Muslim movement which exists for the purpose of presenting the religion of Islam, *in its pure and original form*, to the whole world. This is Islam as taught in the Holy Quran and as illustrated in practice by the Holy Prophet Muhammad. We strongly believe that both non-Muslims and Muslims today desperately need to receive the true message of Islam, which shows that it is a *tolerant, rational, progressive, compassionate, peace-loving and highly spiritual* religion. This is so vastly different from the common, distorted image of Islam, which has done enormous damage to the cause and the standing of this faith in the world.

The Movement’s approach is to try to convince the human mind, intellect, conscience and heart, of the truth of Islam. It works for this objective by presenting reasoned arguments and showing the inherent beauty of Islamic principles and their appeal to true human nature. We also believe that the truth and beauty of Islam must be shown through one’s practical life and example.

History

The Ahmadiyya Movement was founded in 1889 in the Punjab, India, by *Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad* (d. 1908), a renowned scholar and champion of Islam, and an inspired holy man of great repute. At that time, Islam and the Holy Prophet Muhammad were being heavily attacked and denounced, on a world-wide scale, notably by Western writers and Christian missionaries. Religion as such was also facing ferocious assault from the modern thought and science of the times. The traditional Muslim religious leaders, with their out-dated knowledge and preoccupation with trivial controversies, were utterly failing to defend the faith. In fact, several of their own notions were erroneous and damaging to the cause of Islam. The religion followed by most Muslims had come to consist of just

empty rituals, performed mechanically, and blind obedience rendered to religious leaders. Much of the Quran was interpreted and presented in terms of incredible fables and stories, which appeared ridiculous to the thinking mind. Since intelligent Muslims saw this as the only image of Islam before them, they were rapidly becoming disillusioned with their faith, and many were deserting it for other creeds.

It was at this time of darkness, defeat and helplessness for the Muslim world that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad came forward to defend Islam, by means of knowledge he received from God, and to disclose its true, original spirit which had been forgotten over the ages. Through his books, lectures and public debates, over a period of about thirty years, he refuted the mass of charges against Islam, and carried forward the fight into the opponents' own camps by demonstrating the excellence of Islamic teachings over the opposing creeds. Muslims rejoiced at this turn-about, and upon his death glowing tributes were paid to him by prominent Muslims of the time.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, an eminent religious scholar who later held high government office in independent India, wrote an obituary of Hazrat Mirza in the Muslim newspaper *Wakeel*, in which he said:

“In spite of our strong differences with Mirza *sahib* in respect of some of his claims and beliefs, his death has convinced the educated and enlightened Muslims that one of their very great personalities has left them ... he acted against the opponents of Islam as a victorious general. ... This service rendered by Mirza *sahib* will place the coming generations under a debt of gratitude, in that he fulfilled his duty of the defence 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 as long as Muslims have blood flowing in their veins.”

Maulvi Bashir-ud-Din, editor of another Muslim newspaper, *Sadiq-ul-Akhbar*, wrote in his obituary of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad:

“As Mirza *sahib*, with his forceful speeches and magnificent writings, shattered the foul criticism of the opponents of Islam, silencing them forever and proving that truth is after all the truth, and as he left no stone unturned in the service of Islam by

championing its cause to the full, justice requires that one should condole the sudden and untimely death of such a resolute defender of Islam, helper of the Muslims, and an eminent and irreplaceable scholar.”

In an age when Muslims had slumped to their worst decline, Hazrat Mirza received intimation from God indicating that the time for the final, world-wide triumph of the faith of Islam, as prophesied in the Quran, had now arrived. But this would be a victory of the arguments, principles and beauty of Islam, which will capture the hearts and minds of people all over the world.

Hazrat Mirza formed a Movement and community of Muslims to carry the defence and propagation of Islam to the whole world, and to revive the forgotten Islamic values of peace, forgiveness, and sympathy for all mankind. He aptly named it *Ahmadiyya*, after the Holy Prophet Muhammad’s other name *Ahmad* which symbolises the qualities of tenderness, gentleness, love and mercy displayed by the Holy Prophet.

Some of the leading Muslim intellectuals and religious scholars of the time joined the Movement.

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha‘at Islam, Lahore

In 1914, six years after the death of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, some of his prominent followers, whom he had himself appointed to manage the Movement after him, established the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha‘at Islam in Lahore. It was formed in order to preserve and advance Hazrat Mirza’s true mission, and to save the Movement from degenerating into just another squabbling sect of Islam.

Leaders of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement have been recognised, by eminent Muslims outside the Movement, as the ablest Muslim scholars, authors and missionaries of modern times. Maulana Muhammad Ali (d. 1951), the first head of the Anjuman, wrote numerous books about Islam, including many in English, and these have been acclaimed as making a true picture of Islam available to the world, and to the West for the first time. Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din (d. 1932) was the pioneer Muslim missionary to the West. He established the Working Muslim Mission in

England in 1913. The Anjuman also set up a mission in Berlin and completed a magnificent mosque there in 1926.

These missions were, for decades, the principal centres of Islam in Europe, and were supported by Muslims of all persuasions. The missions achieved considerable success in correcting the West's misconceptions about Islam and brought many Europeans into the Muslim faith, including several intellectuals, writers, and members of the British nobility.

The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement also sent its missionaries and literature to many other parts of the world, from Fiji in the remotest east to Suriname in the farthest west, where Muslim communities were helpless in the face of attacks upon the religion of Islam. The threat to Islam was comprehensively repulsed by the Movement in all these places.

Beliefs

Our beliefs are the same as those held by other Muslims, namely, that the Holy Quran is the word of God which is to guide mankind forever, and that the Holy Prophet Muhammad was the perfect model of Islamic teachings whose example shall forever be binding on every Muslim to follow. We believe that, as the principles and teachings of religion reached perfection and completion in the Holy Quran and the example displayed by the Holy Prophet, it follows that the Quran is the final Book of God, and Muhammad (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him) is His Last Prophet, after whom no prophet can appear.

Each new age, however, brings fresh challenges. Also, with the passage of time, the original face of the religion becomes obscured, and faith in people's hearts loses its strength and vitality. To remedy this, God has promised to raise among Muslims, from time to time, men known as *Mujaddids* (revivers of religion) whose mission from God is to: (i) Restore the original teachings of the religion in their true form and spirit; (ii) Uncover fresh truths from the Holy Quran to answer the challenges and doubts of the new age; and (iii) Revive living faith in the hearts by showing their own personal example of the fruits of a close connection with God.

In the modern age, it was *Hazrat* Mirza Ghulam Ahmad who was raised by God as the *Mujaddid* to accomplish these tasks. As Islam and

the Muslims were facing their worst plight at the time he arose, his revivalist mission was required to be the most momentous of all the *mujaddids*. He was, therefore, that great *Mujaddid* who fulfilled the Holy Prophet's prophecy that the Messiah would appear among the Muslims.

Hazrat Mirza highlighted certain features of the Islamic teaching which had been ignored over the course of time, but which were now crucial to the needs of the age. He also corrected several serious misconceptions about Islam prevalent among both Muslims and non-Muslims, and re-established the original teachings. All these points hold the key to the defence and propagation of Islam in today's world, and may be called the *distinguishing beliefs of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement*. We summarise below the main aspects of Islam which the Movement has thus brought to the fore.

We proclaim that **Islam is:**

1. **International** — God raised Prophets in all nations, not only among the Israelites (as already accepted by Muslims) but also in India, China, Persia etc. A Muslim must believe in and respect all these prophets and their scriptures. Islam restores the original purity of the eternal truths taught by them, and broadens the scope of their national teachings to provide a faith for all humanity. Goodness, good people and truth may be found in all nations. God is equally just to all human beings, irrespective of their race, nationality or religion.
2. **Tolerant** — It gives full freedom to everyone to hold, practise and adopt any belief and religion. Differences of belief and interpretation, with whomsoever these may occur, must be tolerated. Criticism against Islam must be answered only by word, and any offence felt must be borne with patience; responding by physical violence is alien to the teachings of Islam. The common image of Islam as an intolerant faith is completely false.
3. **Peaceful** — It condemns all use of force except in unavoidable self-defence. All battles of early Islam were purely defensive. Muslims must live peacefully under any rule which grants them freedom of religion. The impression that Islam urges its followers to wage war

or rebellion to establish its rule is entirely wrong. The concept of *Jihad* is greatly misunderstood: it primarily signifies a spiritual, moral and intellectual struggle to reform oneself and others.

4. **Non-sectarian** — Any person professing the words “*There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah*” must be treated as one’s fellow Muslim. No inquisition is allowed into anyone’s beliefs or motives. Issuing so-called rulings, on some pretext, to expel from Islam those who profess the *Kalima* is entirely against Islamic teachings.
5. **Rational** — It urges use of reason and knowledge in all matters, including religious affairs. Blind following and acceptance are disallowed, and independence of thought is granted. Blind, unthinking obedience to religious leaders is condemned.
6. **Living** — Acts of worship are not rituals to be performed without thought or feeling. They are meant to put the human soul in living contact with a Living God. We must know the purpose of prayer, fasting, etc. and carry them out in their true spirit. God listens to man’s supplications and answers his prayers. In every age there arise, among Muslims, saints who have closeness and communication with God. Their example shows others that there is a Living God Who speaks to man.
7. **Supporter of women** — A great deal of misunderstanding prevails on this point, mainly due to local customs being confused with the teachings of Islam. According to Islam, a woman is a full, responsible human being, just as a man is. She should have the same control over determining the course of her life (including matters of marriage and divorce) as a man has over his life.
8. **Highly moral** — It requires Muslims to develop the highest personal moral virtues, and display these qualities even at the cost of personal or national interest. An Islamic society is *not* created by imposing laws and regulations on people. It is only created by reforming the character of individuals through moral training and example, and this was what the Holy Prophet Muhammad did.
9. **Heart-winning** — It seeks to conquer hearts and minds by showing the logic, truth and beauty of its teachings, in a gentle, loving spirit.

It condemns force or coercion to spread the faith or make people conform to it.

10. Complete — The Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad provide complete and perfect guidance for all mankind, for all time to come. The Holy Prophet is the perfect exemplar of the highest moral virtues. After him, no prophet or authority is to arise. As Hazrat Mirza wrote:

“I firmly believe that our Holy Prophet Muhammad is the Last of the Prophets, and after him no prophet shall come for this nation, neither old nor new.” (*Nishan Asmani*, p. 28).

Work

In its propagation work, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement addresses both the modern, Western world and the Muslim world. To the West, it proclaims that today’s blind material progress will lead mankind to self-destruction, unless it is balanced by an inner spiritual force. Only Islam can provide such a spiritual force which restrains man from abusing the awesome physical power he has acquired, while not hindering material progress and benefits. To the Muslims, the Movement urges that they must return to the Islam of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet, whose spirit is so utterly different from the much-publicised “fundamentalist” Islam of today (which is, in fact, based on later distortions introduced into Islam).

Our work is carried out world-wide by the publication and distribution of literature, and the establishment of branches and centres of the Movement. The Anjuman has a vast range of high-quality, much acclaimed literature in several languages, covering all aspects of Islam. Major books written by Maulana Muhammad Ali in English include the following:

- *Translation of the Holy Quran with commentary*, a comprehensive explanation of the meanings of the Holy Book, based on the most authentic sources, giving carefully reasoned interpretations, taking into account modern circumstances and criticism,

- and removing misconceptions prevalent among both Muslims and non-Muslims (1300 pages);
- *The Religion of Islam*, a full exposition of its sources, principles and practices (700 pages);
 - *A Manual of Hadith*, the guidance given by the Holy Prophet on the practical life of a Muslim (400 pages);
 - *Muhammad The Prophet*, biography of the Holy Prophet, removing many mistaken notions about his life (300 pages);
 - *Living Thoughts of the Prophet Muhammad*, brief life of Holy Prophet and his teachings on various topics.

These and his other writings have, over a period of decades, become classic and legendary books in the field of Islamic literature. Reviewing *The Religion of Islam*, Marmaduke Pickthall, a famous British Muslim scholar, and himself a translator of the Quran into English, wrote as follows:

“Probably no man living has done longer or more valuable service for the cause of Islamic revival than Maulana Muhammad Ali of Lahore. His literary works, with those of the late Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, have given fame and distinction to the Ahmad-iyya Movement. ... Such a book is greatly needed at the present day when in many Muslim countries we see persons eager for the reformation and revival of Islam making mistakes through lack of just this knowledge.”

Translations of these books are also available in several languages. Free booklets are also available on a large scale, in many languages.

All seekers of truth are invited to contact us for further information. We especially invite Muslims to come and see our work, and judge for themselves if it is not their duty to join and support this Movement. Please contact us for further information about Islam and the Ahmad-iyya Movement.