

Instructions and Guidance for the Ahmadiyya *Jama'at*

*For every Ahmadi to read from start to finish,
and to note whatever applies to him
and to put it into practice*

by

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Translator's Note

The Lahore Ahmadiyya *Jama'at* is not a *sect* which merely requires its members to hold certain beliefs different from those held by other Muslim groups. Nor is its chief aim just to establish the truth of its beliefs over the other sects of Islam. It is, rather, a Movement with a broad, practical objective of presenting to the whole world the true picture of Islam. Therefore, membership of this Movement entails, not simply holding a set of beliefs, but exerting oneself to the utmost towards the attainment of its great goal.

In this guide-book written originally in Urdu, probably in the 1920s, Maulana Muhammad Ali describes the aims of the Lahore Ahmadiyya *Jama'at* and the duties of its members which are obligatory upon them if the Movement is to achieve its ends. He explains how each individual must work as part of the community, for the preservation, continuance and strengthening of the *Jama'at* as a whole, so that it can work more effectively. As he says: "The stronger the *Jama'at* and the more progress it makes, this useful work of the service of Islam will advance all the more" (p. 7).

The booklet contains a few references applicable only to the time and place of its writing. These can be easily interpreted by any branch of the *Jama'at* to apply to its own time and circumstances.

This translation was first published in 1995. In this second edition, a published letter by Maulana Muhammad Ali to members of the *Jama'at* has been added, offering more advice (see p. 28).

The importance of this booklet can be judged from the instruction given in the sub-title by the Maulana himself: *For every Ahmadi to read from start to finish, and to note whatever applies to him (or her) and to put it into practice.*

Zahid Aziz, Dr
January 2016

The ten conditions of the *Bai'at* (Pledge) as laid down by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad

Firstly, that until he (or she) is laid in his grave, he will shun all forms and shades of *shirk* (worship of others than Allah).

Secondly, that he will guard against falsehood, fornication, evil-sight and every form of sin, evil, dishonesty, disorder and rebellion; and that whenever his lower desires flare up he shall not surrender to them, no matter how strong the urge may be.

Thirdly, that without fail he will say his prayers five times a day as enjoined by Allah and His Messenger, and that, to the best of his power, he will say his *tahajjud* prayers, invoke Divine blessings on the Holy Prophet, and ask forgiveness for his sins; and will make it a habit to recall Allah's favours, with a truly loving heart, and praise and glorify Him.

Fourthly, that he will do nothing in any way to injure his fellow human beings in general and Muslims in particular, neither with the tongue, nor with the hand, nor in any other way.

Fifthly, that he will remain faithful to Allah under all circumstances, alike in prosperity and adversity, in pleasure and pain, in time of bliss and affliction; that he will resign himself to God under all conditions and will cheerfully bear all hardships and humiliations in His way; and that in the hour of trial he will not turn his back but will step yet onward.

Sixthly, that he will abstain from the observance of un-Islamic customs or following his lower desires; that he will thoroughly submit to the teachings of the Holy Quran; and that in every

walk of life he will hold the word of Allah and that of His Messenger as his guiding principle.

Seventhly, that he will entirely abstain from arrogance and pride, and will live a life of humility, meekness, politeness and mildness.

Eighthly, that he will regard the Religion and its honour and sympathy for Islam as dearer to him than his own life, wealth, honour, children, and kith and kin.

Ninthly, that he will remain engaged in the service of humanity in general, out of love for God, and that, to the best of his ability, he will use all his God-given powers and blessings for the benefit of mankind.

Tenthly, that binding himself with me (Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad) in a bond of brotherhood in the way of Allah, which requires obedience in everything good, he will remain steadfast upon it till his death, and will fulfill this compact to the highest degree, which is unequalled in his physical and worldly relationships and connections.

Summary

Our work: To prepare resources of Islamic knowledge, to produce translations of the Holy Quran in different languages of the world, and to spread them throughout the world.

Distinctive features of our Jama'at:

1. The aim of our lives is the propagation of Islam.
2. To make sacrifices of one's person and possessions for this end.
3. To learn about Islam and its history, and about other faiths.
4. To follow the teachings of Islam and respect its institutions.
5. To show tolerance and broad-mindedness in the propagation of Islam, and to have love for Muslims.
6. To respect and honour the service of Islam.

Our system of organization:

1. We all follow one call and respect that call.
2. That call is the call of the consensus of the *Jama'at*, from which no individual should deviate.
3. The financial system is that all members must:
 - a. give two-thirds of their *zakat* to the *Jama'at*,
 - b. pay out of their income one *Anna* for every *Rupee*¹ as contributions, and
 - c. donate towards specially arising needs.

¹ The *Rupee* is the currency in Pakistan and India, and was divided into 16 *annas* at the time of writing.

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4. To respect and honour one another, think well of one another, and also hold the leaders to account.
 5. To take such a close interest in the work of the community so as to give it precedence over personal business.

Means of our progress:

1. The zeal and fervour of faith created in us by the Promised Messiah, due to his spiritual power, must be ever on the increase.
2. To meet one another. To visit the centre, Lahore, and to attend the annual gathering is essential. In your own towns and cities, apart from the Friday gathering, there should be another day fixed for coming together and discussing some religious topic.
3. *Dars* of the Holy Quran (talks explaining meanings of some part of the Quran) must be conducted regularly.
4. We must keep up study of the literature of the Movement and its periodicals.
5. Our children's education, so far as possible, should be at the Muslim High School.²
6. The poor, needy, fatherless children and widows should be looked after.
7. Marriages should take place among ourselves.
8. When we notice something which requires rectification or improvement, it is our duty to inform the Centre about it.
9. We must be concerned about extending the *Jama'at* in size. We must propagate the message of this Movement to our relatives, and then to others. We must ensure that our wives and children take the *bai'at*

² This was a school founded and run by the Anjuman in Lahore.

Instructions and guidance for Ahmadis

The brief guidance given here is for those who, by having taken the *bai'at* of the Promised Messiah, have pledged to hold the religion above the world. I want these points to be always kept in view. The secret of success towards any goal is no more than that man must not neglect that goal no matter what condition he finds himself in. He must keep it in view under all circumstances that befall him, and remain engaged in the struggle for it.

Before I deal with those matters, it is necessary to explain what work has so far been done by our community, and what work remains to be done in future. Without going into details, I wish to say that the most essential work, which is required not only to propagate and spread Islam among other peoples but the internal reform and progress of the Muslims is connected with it as well, is to disseminate the Holy Quran in different languages of the world and to publicize the teachings contained in this Holy Book, to take the story of the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad to non-Muslims and Muslims — so that it serves as a source of attraction for the former and as a source of right guidance for the latter — and to remove all the blots which are upon the pure face of Islam by showing the world its true picture.

It is clear that this is the weapon with which Allah Himself sent the Promised Messiah, and this is the successful means which will in the end crush falsehood. To prepare material about the real teachings of Islam in different languages is the first task. The second is to spread those teachings. It is by these two means that the promise of the Holy Quran, that “He will make it prevail over all religions” (9:33), will be seen to be fulfilled. So also will be fulfilled the revelation of the Promised Messiah: “Muslims will again be true Muslims.”

By the grace of God, our community has taken the first step in this gloriously important work, and has also seen the recognition which Allah has made that work to receive. After our translation, the call arose from many quarters to have the Quran translated into English. We do not question anyone's sincerity but if the aim is the service of Islam then there are scores of other kinds of writings required. As the Holy Quran has been translated into English, it should have been tried to meet the other needs first. In any case, these calls show that by the grace of Allah our step is in the right direction of success. However, what we have done is nothing as compared to what we have to do in future. If the promise of Allah is true, and it is surely true, that the faith of Islam shall be triumphant over all religions, and if the Promised Messiah was sent by Allah, and he surely was, then that true picture of Islam to which the Imam of the age has drawn our attention must be presented and propagated in all the languages of the world.

A useful work having begun, in order to continue it and complete it, it is necessary that the *Jama'at* which began that work must continue to exist under an organized system which safeguards it from degeneration. It must progress and grow, for if we do not progress then decline must necessarily follow. And if our system is not an organized one, then the present *Jama'at* cannot continue to exist. This would damage the cause of Islam, for a useful work of the highest order, having started, would have come to a halt. Therefore, all the steps for the strengthening and the progress of the *Jama'at* must be kept in view by each one of us, whatever our circumstances. The stronger the *Jama'at* and the more progress it makes, this useful work of the service of Islam will advance all the more. Conversely, the more defective is the organization of the *Jama'at* and the slower is the pace of progress, this great work of the service of Islam will suffer accordingly. And in the sight of Allah all of us shall be responsible for having neglected the work which we pledged ourselves to do, at the hand of a man sent by God, and for failing to fulfil that compact.

I. Distinctive features of our community

The first point is that we must never forget the distinctive features of our community, by adhering to which we remain distinguished from others. I will only refer to a few main such features.

1. Propagation of Islam

Our real and most prominent distinction is that our lives have one particular aim, that is, the propagation of Islam. I do not deny that there may be many other people in the world the aim of whose lives is the propagation of Islam. However, it is our distinction because our community came into existence for this very purpose of spreading the name of God and His Messenger in the world. In fact, our community has been created to keep alive the work which Allah assigned to the *Mujaddid* of this century and the Imam of this age. This was to break the doctrines of the Cross and to take Islam to the world till it is triumphant over all religions. The “breaking of the Cross” was particularly selected because the most powerful obstacle to the spread of Islam is the religion of the Cross, i.e. Christianity.

When a man or a community makes a certain purpose the goal of life, then whatever work he or it does should help in the attainment of the goal. But nothing becomes the goal of life by merely saying so. It is when a man understands what is the goal of his life that there arises an urge in his heart for work to that end. For its attainment such a passionate love is created in him that even if thousands of difficulties are found in its path, they all pale into insignificance in the face of his determination and courage. No attraction or love can divert his attention from this work.

We saw with our own eyes the powerful passion and fervour which existed in the heart of the Promised Messiah for raising aloft

the word of Allah. That passion set alight, not hundreds, but thousands of hearts, and ultimately produced a revolution in the world. Those very Muslims who were entirely indifferent to the work of the propagation of Islam, as they held it to be of no importance, are today calling out from all directions for the necessity of this work. At all hours, he had but one anxiety: how can the name of God be made to reach the most distant lands? This was the object for which he prayed in the middle of the night, and for which he wept in the court of the Lord. All else was sacrificed for this purpose. That same condition must be created in our hearts today, the same urge, the same shedding of tears before the Lord, and the same sacrifices. This I consider to be the first distinction of our community.

2. Sacrifices

No goal can be reached, nor a step taken towards its attainment, until great sacrifices are made for the cause. Therefore, if we have really made as the aim of our lives the propagation and preaching of Islam, it is essential that another distinction be created in us, namely, that we make unparalleled sacrifices for the attainment of this goal. The sacrifices may be of life or of possessions:

“They struggled hard in the way of Allah with their possessions and their lives.” (The Quran, 8:72)

A person cannot make any sacrifice unless he considers his life and his property, which Allah has given him, as a trust from God which he must cheerfully return in His way when demanded by Him. In the verse, “Surely Allah has bought from the believers their lives and their property; for them is the Garden,” (9:111) the reference is to exactly this fact.

Therefore, the second distinction which must exist in us is that we must be ever ready to leave our homes and countries for the exaltation of the word of Allah when required, and do so without any hesitation. If we have to bear physical hardship, we must bear it, and if we have to spend money we must give the highest priority to that expenditure and be pleased to spend it. And when we have nothing to spend, we should feel pained over it, and have the deep desire in our heart that Allah may give us something to spend in His way.

3. Knowledge of religion

As the work of the propagation of Islam requires us to have adequate knowledge of Islam, on the one hand, and of the religions of the nations among whom we seek to spread Islam, on the other, the third distinction of our community ought to be that each one of us, whether great or small, must make the fullest effort to acquire knowledge of Islam and other religions. This is not a difficult task. Every person, despite being busy earning a livelihood, can find some time to devote to increasing his knowledge. Those who are literate can peruse the relevant books as a pastime.

In the attainment of religious knowledge, the study of the Holy Quran occupies the highest place. Then come Hadith, life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, and Islamic history. From among other religions, our nearest neighbour is the Hindu religion. It is absolutely essential to acquire familiarity with the principles of this faith, and in particular with those of its modern sect the Arya Samaj, so that by knowing their beliefs we can present the true religion to them in the most appropriate way.

The Christian religion, as I have mentioned earlier, is the biggest obstacle in the path of the progress of Islam. For the triumph of the faith of Islam it is imperative that each one of us, according to his capacity, makes sufficient preparation to be able to face this religion. Besides this, one must know something of the other great religions of the world.

The writings of the Promised Messiah not only cast a tremendous amount of light on all these questions in this age, but give in our hands the knowledge before which untruth cannot make a stand. Therefore, it is absolutely imperative for us to be familiar with his books and to read them over and over again. And not only to read them ourselves, but to include them in the field of study of our next generation at the earliest stage. Familiarity with his books creates within a person a great urge to serve the cause of truth and gives him the strongest power to confront false beliefs, and this is needed above all at the present day.

4. Observance of the teachings of Islam

Our fourth distinctive feature must be observance of the teachings of Islam and respect for its institutions. No group and no individual can be successful in taking the truth to others unless they act on those true teachings themselves. Only those words can have an effect upon the hearts of others which come out of the depth of a person's own heart. And whatever is in the heart casts its influence upon the body and its limbs, and is manifested in the individual's actions. Many people think that, irrespective of their practical actions, they are entitled to convey to others what they believe in their hearts to be true. This may be valid to some extent, but if a man's belief is too weak to influence his own actions, how can his words influence other people? Whoever wishes that his words should have an effect upon others — and every one of us should have this desire — he must first produce an effect upon his own actions. The work of influencing others comes after that stage. We can bring the world to submit to the Holy Quran, but only when our own heads have bowed to it first with humility.

5. Tolerance and broad-mindedness in propagation

Our fifth distinctive feature is to be broad-minded in the propagation of the religion. The Holy Quran has taught us that prophets appeared among every people. Therefore, even the thought of denigrating the sacred scripture or the revered founder of another religion ought not to enter our minds. Of course, if there is a flaw in the teaching of a religious sage, or if a scripture contains a teaching unacceptable to the human mind or impossible to act upon, it is quite another matter to point that out. But we must have respect in our hearts for the founders and the scriptures of every religion.

All religions lead man to have a connection with God to one extent or another. But the perfect connection can only be attained by following the religion of Islam. The teachings of all the other religions were, in the first place, meant only for particular ages and particular nations, limited as regards both time and place. Secondly, the accounts of the lives of the founders of those religions were not preserved accurately, and many wrong stories mixed up with the truth gained currency. In the same way, all the sacred scriptures had

undergone alterations. As a result, human beings needed a religion which was free from the limitations of nation and time, whose founder's life was known in the light of history, and whose scripture was unaffected by alteration. Only such a religion could produce a perfect connection between man and God, and that religion is Islam.

By embracing Islam, a person does not lose what he had before, nor does he respect any the less a revered figure he respected before. On the contrary, by accepting Islam his heart is opened to honouring all the other founders of the great religions of the world as well, and his mind is broadened to accepting every truth. Therefore, a man who calls others to Islam should already possess this broadness of heart and mind, thus being able to present the truth without attacking any other religious personality.

Earlier religions undoubtedly possessed light within them, but that light was not strong and became still more dim. The previous prophets acted as lamps in a dark night, but after the sun of prophethood has risen — the Holy Prophet Muhammad — people must open their hearts to receive the brightness of this world-luminary instead of taking light from the earlier lamps.

Tolerance among Muslims

In place of speaking ill of others, the superiority of the truth should be put forward. The religion which has taught such broadmindedness towards other faiths and their revered figures cannot obviously teach you to hate the other sects and parties of the Muslims themselves. Consequently, we Ahmadis must honour the revered figures of all the sects of Islam. No mortal is free of faults, but we should aim to keep in view the good qualities of the leaders respected by various sects and acknowledge their work and services.

We must have no part in reviling or denouncing any sect of Islam. Most importantly, when a person professes the words "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah," we should regard his being called a *kafir* by anyone to be the most abhorrent sin of all. If there is tolerance in our hearts for those of other faiths, this being the very teaching of the Holy Quran, then to be intolerant towards our own Muslim brethren and call them as *kafir* is contrary to this breadth of mind. From *Hazrat* Abu Bakr

onwards, we should honour every imam, *wali*, *muhaddas* and *mujaddid*, truly from the bottom of our hearts, and bear no ill-will or malice towards any sect of Islam. Of course, in accordance with the teaching of the Quran, “they exhort each other to truth” (103:3), we must call all Muslims towards the truth established by the *Mujaddid* of this age, and when the beliefs of a sect are mistaken we must make this fact quite clear, and act according to the words of the Quran: “not fearing the censure of any censurer” (5:54).

6. Holding work of propagation in high honour

The last point I consider important to mention here is that there must be true respect in our hearts for the service of Islam and raising aloft the word of Allah. If you think about it, to spread the name of God in the world and to call to the truth is the most honourable work because it was the work done by the prophets and they are the most eminent people among mankind. No other work can reach the exalted and elevated status which this work holds. However, in practice most people treat it as menial and degraded work. When we wish to see our relations and friends reaching some high rank, what comes to our mind is some worldly position, success in business or ownership of property. To prepare them to spread the name of God appears to be degrading. We make up various excuses for this attitude, for example that we do not wish to see our children being dependent on someone for their livelihood, as if this risk only exists if we prepare our children for the service of the faith. The actual fact is that there is no respect for this work in our hearts, even though we may sometimes hold in honour those who do this work because of their eminence.

There is no doubt that it is also important that we respect above all those people from among us who go forth to work in the way of God and to proclaim His word. This is also a source of encouragement to those engaged in this work. But the criterion of true respect is only this, that when we are in search of a respectable line of occupation for our children and near ones, we should also sometimes consider the work of the propagation of the word of God, and prepare them for service of the faith by regarding it as work worthy of the highest honour. If, after being trained for this work, they do not serve the faith, we would not be liable before God.

II. Our system of organization

This is the second aspect to which I wish to draw attention. Without organization a community cannot even survive, let alone make progress. The better and stronger the organization of a community, the faster will that community progress and the more successful will it be in attaining its objective. To organize the community, it is essential to keep in view the following principles.

1. Responding to one will and one voice

The characteristic of every living body is that as soon as it wills to do something all its organs set to work towards that end. As soon as you start the engine of a machine, its various parts and components come into action and begin their allotted work. This is also the sign of a living community, that on receiving the call from one source all its workers responsible for that task set about their work. This is known as the organization of a community. The community in which there is no organization, whose members do not set about exerting their all for achieving its objective after having heard the *one voice*, that is not a living community. If the various components of a body do not work subject to one will, it cannot be called a living body but is merely a heap of separate parts.

Therefore, as a community our first and foremost need is that we must come together to respond to *one voice*, and when that voice calls us to the attainment of the objective of our existence, we all rush immediately, forgetting everything else, and each one sets about his work. At that time our individual will must be subordinated, and all our efforts must be directed towards the fulfilment of another will, in obedience to which the community should come into action.

2. Voice and call of consensus

The one voice to be obeyed can be the voice of an individual or that of the whole community. By the voice of an individual is meant that all the affairs of the community are placed in the hands of one man, and he is given absolute authority to run the movement in whatever way he wishes. By the voice of the community is meant that the call to be obeyed is that of the decision of the movement arrived at by mutual consultation. It is this second method which is taught by Islam: "Their affairs are by consultation among themselves" (the Quran, 42:38). The Holy Prophet Muhammad is ordered: "Consult them in affairs" (the Quran, 3:159).

The reason for the principle of consultation is that every person should be given his human right of expressing his opinion, but in such a way that the diversity of views does not cause harm to the community. When several people give their opinions about a certain matter, each view is bound to differ in some degree, and it is impossible to act on all of them. Therefore it is essential to reach an agreed view. This is decided by the majority of opinion, that is to say, taking the views of those people who have been chosen as persons of sound opinion, whatever decision is favoured by the majority of them, that is decreed to be the consultative decision or the will of the community. It is then binding upon every member of the movement to obey that decision.

This is the only way in which, despite the freedom of opinion, there can be agreement upon one view. Muslims have generally ignored this principle, and instead of mutual consultation or the will of the community prefer to follow the opinion of one man. In fact, sometimes even when consultation does take place, the collective decision is made subject to the will of one man, so that when opinion is divided the imam or *amir* is free to follow the majority or the minority as he wishes. This is nothing other than imposing the will of an individual over the will of the community. On the other hand, the Companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad made decisions according to the majority view.

Ahmadiyya Movement to work by majority view

In this present age, the Promised Messiah has again revived this true principle, and has clearly written with his own hand that whatever

is the decision of the Anjuman arrived at by a majority, that shall be followed, and no individual shall be able to over-ride such a decision. So this is the principle which our community ought to abide by in its system of organization. The man who disregards the collective decision, or prefers instead to follow his own view, is violating the clear command of Allah given in the words: "Their affairs are by consultation among themselves," and is adjudged by God as a sinner.

It must also be borne in mind that consultation is only done in case of the important matters. Therefore, the administrative tasks which are entrusted to particular people shall also be started according to collective decisions. The principle is that an individual's opinion shall be subservient to the will of the community, and cannot prevail over it. However, in matters of religious belief, sometimes when a person's mind has led him to a certain conclusion he cannot be compelled to reject it. But as regards the work done by the community, if, after agreement having been reached, a uniform view is not followed the result is disunity and ruination of the community.

3. Financial contributions

According to our decision, arrived at by consultation, every Ahmadi must take part in the running of the community alike by means of making monetary contributions, whether he is great or small. The standard of greatness in our community is determined by the object of our life. The more a man serves Islam, the greater he is. The man who devotes his whole life for the service of Islam is indeed very great and worthy of the highest honour. But no one can be exempt from doing his duty in the set-up of the community. For example, just as the paying of *zakat* is incumbent upon a man in employment or in business or engaged in some other worldly work, so it is also obligatory on the man who serves the faith day and night. Payment of *zakat* is not conditional upon the kind of work someone does; the only condition relates to the minimum limit of wealth. If a person has wealth in excess of a certain minimum amount, *zakat* is obligatory on him.

In observance of this command of the Quran, our decision, arrived at by consultation, is that all our members shall pay two-thirds

of their due *zakat* into the funds of our community, and the remaining one-third they shall give as they wish. A somewhat similar practice under certain circumstances can be seen in the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

Contributions by way of *jihad*

Moreover, to carry out religious works the expenditure of money is required, and the Holy Quran too has, in addition to the *zakat*, also prescribed *jihad* as obligatory. Whether *jihad* is by the sword or by the pen, in both cases the spending of money is required. In the light of this injunction of the Quran, our decision taken by mutual consultation has decreed it as compulsory that *all members must make monthly donations of at least one-twentieth of their income*, and may pay more if they so wish. To fail to follow this call of the community is to cut oneself adrift from the collective system of the *Jama'at*. This is a responsibility which devolves upon the great and the small, the rich and the poor. If the leaders are in the forefront of this activity, they shall become an example for the ordinary members to follow. If the ordinary members take the lead in this good work, they will be envied by the leaders.

It must also be remembered that the prominent and great men of the Movement also bear a greater responsibility. It is not only that the man who has been blessed with more wealth by God must give more for the pleasure of his Lord. But the greater sense and understanding someone possesses, or the stronger is the zeal for the faith in someone's heart, the more is their responsibility. So if the ordinary members of the *Jama'at* give one-twentieth of their income, the trustees and office-bearers of the Anjuman ought to give even more as their regular contribution. Besides this, they should also take on the responsibility for supporting particular works which are being carried out.

As regards the special needs which arise from time to time, everyone must contribute towards those. The Holy Prophet Muhammad too used to face such needs, and he would urge his Companions to give their wealth. Various Companions even used to bring their all, or one-half, or one-quarter or less, of their wealth when such needs arose. Similar needs arise in the work of the propagation of Islam.

4. Respect for, and trust in, one another

For the running of the organization of the community, another essential requirement is that the workers must respect, trust, and think well of one another. When those who are working mistrust one another, the work suffers badly. If the workers are godly and selfless, there is as a result less occurrence of mutual mistrust. However, there could still be misunderstandings. Sometimes, a doubt or suspicion keeps on building up in a person's heart, till it reaches a dangerous level. Then that suspicion is propagated, in the form of criticism, from one person to another till it damages the unity and the organization of the community.

Therefore, first of all what is needed is that you should think well of your fellow-worker, as far as possible. When he does something which can be represented both in a good and in an adverse light, you must refrain from taking it in the bad sense. If you have a complaint against a worker, then instead of harbouring it in your heart, so that it takes root there, or spreading it to all and sundry, you must take it to those people who can rectify it and who can hold the worker concerned to account.

Workers will always make mistakes. The best way of rectifying these mistakes is to bring them to the notice of responsible officers. Along with this, I will also emphasize that anyone appointed in this Movement to some office, no matter how high or great, is responsible before Allah and before the people for properly discharging the trust placed in his hands by the community. Nonetheless, mistakes are mistakes, and if he turns from the right way it is the duty of the community to set him straight. This is just as *Hazrat* Abu Bakr, when accepting his *Khilafat*, said: if I deviate, you must set me right.

This is also needed today, so that while on the one hand we honour those who work in the way of Allah, on the other hand we must be prepared to call them to account for their mistakes. And this cannot be done unless all the members of the community take so much interest in each and every work of the Movement as if it were their personal work.

5. Collective community work

The fifth requirement of our system of organization is what has just been mentioned, that all the members of the community must take so much interest in the works of the Movement that they give them priority over their personal business. Practical inaction among the Muslims has reached the extent that when associations and committees are being formed everyone wants to gain some position or office. However, as to taking interest in the work, people do not even attend the meetings. A Muslim's behaviour should be the opposite of this. There must be no desire in his heart to be appointed to some position or office, but when he is assigned a work or responsibility by collective agreement he must do it with such fervour and care that it becomes more important to him than his own business.

I wish that our *Jama'at* does not let this weakness creep into it which is prevalent among Muslims generally. The attitude of our members must be that the work is the work of God; whether I am chosen to do it or my brother, it is the same to me. If I am chosen to do some work, I must not shirk the responsibility but rather accept it cheerfully and exert myself fully to complete the task. The Holy Quran contains the command to honour collective, national works. Such a work is described as *amr jāmi'*, indicating that it is so important that all those who are called for it must come together for it (*jam'*, meaning *gathering together*). In fact, it is ordered that, having gathered together, they should not leave without the permission of the imam or the head. Similarly, when the members of the Movement are consulted on some matter, everyone must play his part in the consultation as far as his understanding allows.

III. Our Progress

Nothing in the world remains static. When a nation stops progressing, it necessarily starts declining. Till a certain time, the Muslims possessed the urge to go forward in the world, but as soon as this urge died down the process of national decline set in. Eventually the stage was reached where sons of the Muslims began to join Christianity and Hinduism. Whether that number is small or large is not the question, but there is no doubt that this is a backward step. Unless we too turn our attention to making our Movement progress, decline will set in. Therefore, each one of us must anxiously ponder about the ways in which our Movement can progress.

1. Zeal and conviction of faith

The most necessary requirement in the advancement of the *Jama'at* is that the fervour of faith of the members of the *Jama'at* should grow. Any community's strength depends on the zeal which it feels towards its particular objective. It is generally observed that in the works of the Muslims the urge of faith is largely absent, and this is why whatever they set out to do remains lifeless. It was the fervour of faith by which the Companions of the Holy Prophet achieved the impossible. They were few in number but their pure souls were filled with the zeal of faith by which they overcame the greatest tribulations and the darkest difficulties. The conviction was so firm in their hearts that Islam was destined to triumph, and that ultimately people would submit to the greatness of God, that even obstacles as great as mountains could not stand in the way of this faith.

Today, however, faith in the final triumph of Islam has died from the hearts of the Muslims, except for a few, and the apparent circumstances seem to be opposed to this prospect. Therefore, it was essential that God Himself re-ignite this flame anew in the

heart of a man, so that sparks from it bring dead hearts to life, and those hearts become filled with the faith that even mountains will crumble before the spiritual might of Islam and the Quran, and Islam shall triumph in the world despite its utter powerlessness and helplessness. All visible means of the success of Islam had entirely ceased to exist, and it was impossible to create faith in its success except by God Himself regenerating it in a man's heart. Therefore God filled the heart of the *Mujaddid* of the time with this conviction, and sparks from the fire which was kindled within him illuminated the hearts of those who joined him. That powerful awareness was created in an entire community which leads to the sacrifice of possessions and lives for the Divine cause.

To keep alive this awareness and to nourish and strengthen it by one's sacrifices, so much so that it penetrates into others as well, is the first requirement of our progress. Just as the zeal of faith and the urge of love leads to the making of sacrifices, so does the making of sacrifices further strengthen that zeal of faith and urge of love. These two things are inter-dependent, and today the only way in which we can maintain and develop that zeal of faith created in our hearts by the man sent by God is to sacrifice our possessions and lives in the Divine cause.

2. Meetings and gatherings

Our most powerful way of making progress is to increase our mutual relations and interaction. The meeting of human beings with one another is like the rubbing together of two stones, which by friction creates energy. As regards meeting one another, the gathering at the Centre of the Movement in Lahore has the greatest importance. This gathering takes place once a year on the occasion of the annual *Jalsa*, and all members must make the effort to come. Besides this, whenever possible, one must try to strengthen the mutual bonds of meeting.

In addition, every *Jama'at* must arrange for gatherings to take place from time to time in its city or locality. One gathering is on Friday for the prayers, which every *Jama'at* must hold in its particular area. It is essential that our Movement makes arrangements for the holding of Friday prayers everywhere. The Friday *khutba* is a highly useful part of education which the Muslims have limited to

a few words of Arabic or recitation of some poetry. Its real purpose, however, is to awaken the nation, create high morals in it, make it aware of important national projects etc., but no attention is paid to these objects in mosques generally. Therefore, for our progress it is essential to make our separate arrangements for the holding of Friday prayers.

Apart from this, it is also necessary to hold another weekly gathering at every place, at which important affairs of the *Jama'at* are discussed and speeches or lectures are given which allow not only one man's knowledge to benefit everyone else but enable members of the Movement to be equipped for the work of preaching and propagation. For such meetings, Sunday is the most suitable day as it is an official holiday. For these gatherings, a religious topic should be chosen, relating to our *Jama'at* or the teachings of Islam or another religion, and all members should participate in the discussion.

3. Learning the Quran

As it is only the Holy Quran that creates spiritual strength within us, it is essential that in all large *Jama'ats* instruction (*dars*) in the Quran must be instituted. It will also provide the benefits of holding a gathering of the community. Besides this, every member whether man or woman, boy or girl, must recite something from the Holy Quran daily and also try to understand its meaning and translation. This is the means of our self-purification and the way which can lead to our progress.

4. Reading religious literature

It is essential for all members to be acquainted with the religious knowledge which is broadcast from the Centre of the Movement because through knowledge only can inner strength be produced within man. Some of this religious knowledge can be easily mastered by anyone. In particular our magazines, Urdu or English, are worth mentioning in this connection. A magazine is not burdensome to read, even for the most lethargic person, and if some of it consists of scholarly material a man can acquire a great deal of knowledge without much exertion.

Besides this, the magazines contain important news of all kinds about the Movement, with which all our members should keep abreast. Therefore, it is essential for every member of the Movement who can read to get our community's magazine *Paigham Sulh*, and those who know English should also receive *The Light*. This will not only keep alive their connection with the Movement, but they will also continue to gain valuable knowledge without much effort.

5. Education and training of the next generation

It is essential that our younger generation be imbued with the same love of faith and zeal for the propagation of the word of God as is the case with their elders. However, this cannot happen unless this awareness is created within them by means of education. For this purpose, we have established a high school of our own at the Centre of the Movement in Lahore. Those friends who can do so should send their children to this school. True love for one's children is simply that they should be shown the way which leads to happiness and prosperity. Those parents who refuse to let their children be separated from them, preferring to deprive them of education, are harming their children in the name of love. Similarly, those parents also do not really love their children who, out of parental attachment, refuse to send them to our school here while it is our own community's school where their children can be influenced by noble ideas and, along with becoming capable of earning their livelihood, can also become servants of the Divine faith.

If they wish their children to become the joy of their eyes, it is necessary that they educate them under the principles which can instill the right aspirations within them. Thus the children will be a source of true happiness for their parents in this life, and after their death they will remain as the best memorial left behind by the parents and be the servants of the Divine faith. Our school not only provides religious education of the highest standard, but is also distinguished in secular education and moral supervision.

I would also say that those parents who wish to give higher education to their children should consider entering them in the teaching profession. If, after qualification, they wish to take up employment they can do very useful propagation work as well because

they can influence their students. And if Allah puts it into their hearts, they can become missionaries of Islam as well.

6. Care of the poor and destitute

No community can make progress unless it makes arrangements for the care and welfare of its poor, destitute, widows and fatherless children. The life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad is the most shining example of this truth. He had the greatest urge in his heart for helping the poor and the destitute, and each one of us must have a similar urge. The greatest men in the world have come from the ranks of the poor and the dispossessed. The Holy Quran says: "Did He (God) not find you (O Prophet) an orphan and give you shelter?" (93:6).

Therefore, to care for the poor of our community must be the first duty of each one of us. When you are strongly determined to do this, the grace of Allah creates the means and resources with which to do it. The life of even the poorest member of the community must be considered as a valuable treasure, and so far as we have the power we must try to make that life useful.

7. Fraternal, social and marriage relations

For the progress of the community it is also essential that, so far as possible, we should have strong, loving bonds of all kinds among ourselves. It is true that spiritual brotherhood is a most effective means of creating mutual love, but this is further strengthened by physical relationship. This is why the Promised Messiah wanted the marriage relations of our *Jama'at* to be within ourselves, so far as possible.

To this end, arrangements have been made here at the Centre of the Movement to provide all possible assistance to those members who seek marriage relations for their sons and daughters.

Besides this, the bonds within the *Jama'at* must be much stronger than bonds of physical relationship. When someone is ill or facing other difficulties, members of the *Jama'at* must consider themselves like parts of one and the same body, and do all that is possible to help a brother who is suffering in any way. They should

share in one another's sorrows as well as joys, occasions of mourning as well as marriage, just as people who are related share these occasions with one another.

8. Reporting shortcomings and weaknesses

Wherever in the *Jama'at* any weaknesses are felt, anything which is noticed as requiring to be put right, or if an idea occurs to a member for the improvement of the community, these must be reported to the Centre from time to time. To remain silent in these respects does harm to the Movement. It may not be possible to correct all the shortcomings so reported, or to act upon all the suggestions, nonetheless all such information must be conveyed to the Centre. Every effort will be made to make improvements.

9. Increase and extension of the *Jama'at*

The last point I wish to make in this connection is that all the matters of internal improvement mentioned above constitute the first step of our real progress. Our real progress is the expansion of the size of the *Jama'at*. Although the object of the creation of our *Jama'at* is the propagation and the preaching of Islam, this work itself requires the existence of an organized *Jama'at*. Many notions are prevailing among the ordinary Muslims which themselves prove to be a great obstacle in the work of the propagation of Islam; for example, to believe that Jesus is alive in heaven in his physical body, without undergoing any bodily change or requiring any food and drink, to consider that this *Umma* stands in need of the coming of an Israelite prophet, to hold the belief that a Mahdi will come to spread Islam by the sword, killing anyone who does not accept Islam, or to believe in the coming of a prophet after the *Khatam an-nabiyyin*. All such beliefs are acting as a dangerous impediment in the way of the propagation of Islam. So it is essential to create a *Jama'at* whose beliefs, on the one hand, are free of these false notions, and on the other hand the object of its existence is only the propagation of Islam. The progress of such a *Jama'at* is really the progress of Islam itself.

We must all, therefore, be concerned about extending the size of the *Jama'at*. Allah has taught every Muslim that the way to avoid loss is for him to call others to the truth (ch. 103 of the Quran). As

we have received the greatest blessing of the truth through the Promised Messiah, it is our duty to take this blessing to our other Muslim brothers. Following the teaching, “warn your nearest relations” (the Quran, 26:214), each one of us should first turn his attention to his close relatives. This field is open for everyone, and he has an audience. Our task is to convey the truth. So everyone should begin with his near relations first, then take his friends, then those with whom he has some dealings, and then people further afield.

But removing wrong notions from the hearts cannot be done in just one attempt. It takes continuous struggle, and we must never tire in that struggle. If we preach to one hundred people, and ninety-nine of them do not accept what we say, we must still hope that the remaining one man will accept it. The issues towards which the *Mujaddid* of the Age has drawn attention are, in reality, absolutely vital for the existence and the success of Islam. Eventually Muslims will turn to this way. But there must be opposition in the beginning. Without caring about this opposition, we must strive to call all Muslims to this path, the true path of the service of Islam.

While striving to make our Muslim brothers understand these matters, we must also have recourse to the prayer that Almighty Allah may open their hearts for the acceptance of the truth brought by the Promised Messiah, so that the face of Islam be purified of all the ugly blots upon it and all of us together be able to spread the teachings of Islam in the world.

10. Giving up wrong customs

Another matter which I wish to bring to the attention of all members is that every one of us must first bring about reform in his own household. Our homes should present a model of Islamic simplicity, refraining from all kinds of wrong customs and traditions. In Muslim homes the prevalence of idolatrous practices has ruined the morals, while extravagance and wasteful spending has destroyed their wealth and property.

Shirk is not only to bow down before someone other than Allah, but to entreat others than Allah to fulfil your wishes in just as much *shirk*. To make offerings at the tombs of saints, and to ask for your needs to be met through them, is *shirk*. At times of misfortune and

trouble, one must turn only to God and bow before Him only. Of course, to make use of any means and to employ efforts does not conflict with turning towards God and seeking His help.

Similarly, on the sad occasions of mourning and the joyous occasions of marriage, the various customs and traditions should be abandoned in favour of Islamic simplicity. Most such customs cause a man to ruin himself financially for the sake of keeping up appearances. The Holy Quran treats such expenditure as “spending to be seen by people” (2:264), which must not be done by a Muslim. There are many people who, when following such a custom, deceive themselves by saying that they will do it just this once, out of necessity, but will never do so again. This is exactly the wrong path which leads those who commit a sin to eventual destruction. Any sin or evil custom can only be uprooted if you have the courage to ignore the opposition and the difficulties that you face as being of no importance.

Besides this, it must be borne in mind that our homes can only be freed from the shackles of these wrong traditions and customs if the women and the children are given instruction in the true teachings of the faith. Therefore, all our members must try as hard as they possibly can to make their homes into true models of religious observance, and arrange for proper education in the Holy Quran, Hadith and Islamic history to be provided within their homes.

A letter to the Community

(Translated below is a letter by Maulana Muhammad Ali which he sent directly to certain members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya community, and was also published in the community's Urdu newspaper *Paigham Sulh* in its issue for 24 February 1944 for everyone's information. It contains directions and advice on what each individual member can do to strengthen the cause of the Movement.)

1st February 1944

Respected brother,

Assalamu alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuhu

Our *Jama'at* can grow in strength only when all its individuals realise their responsibilities and strive hard to fulfil them. Thus, in order to give strength and stability to this *Jama'at*, which has now proved itself by the grace of God as the sole bearer of the Holy Quran in the entire Islamic world, I appeal to you to direct your attention to the following matters. Keep this letter safe with you, read it from time to time, and do not hesitate to take any of the steps listed below that you are able to undertake.

1. In your immediate family, your wife and children, if there are any adults who have not yet joined the *Jama'at*, try to persuade them to join. This will not only build up the *Jama'at*, but it will also bring greater peace to your household.
2. Turn to your brothers, sisters and other relations, and make your best efforts to bring those towards the *Jama'at* who are still deprived of its blessings.
3. From among your friends and acquaintances, whomsoever you can directly invite to join the *Jama'at*, you must do so.

4. To all the people who are within your sphere of influence or with whom you have some dealings, explain that this *Jama'at* is engaged in the highest service of Islam and that they, too, should join its ranks.

Note: Not only invite people in these four categories to join the *Jama'at*, but also make every possible effort to convince them of its truth. Send them our booklets, and then seek the help of one of our missionaries for this purpose. If necessary, contact the Central Anjuman so that correspondence may be established with interested individuals and necessary literature be sent to them. Some copies of the *bai'at* (pledge) form are enclosed with this letter.

5. Be aware whether those connected with you are regular in offering the daily prayers as far as they can. If you see any of them neglectful and lax in this regard, try to make them understand gently and keep trying. Similarly, also remain vigilant that they follow all other key Islamic practices. If you perceive a failing is not within your power to correct, resort to praying or make some other attempt to bring about improvement.
6. Inculcate the habit of regular prayer in your children, whether sons and daughters, from the age of seven years.
7. Encourage your children right from the start to give money for the propagation of Islam every month, no matter how small an amount, and have their names entered in the lists of regular contributors. In this way you will sow in their hearts from an early age the seeds of passion for the propagation of Islam, which will develop into a strong tree when they are grown up.
8. Establish the practice in your households of reading the books of the Promised Messiah, our Urdu and English periodicals, and other religious literature. Not only you but also members of your household should peruse these writings.
9. Make a plan to teach your children the Holy Quran with translation. Either do this yourself or engage the services

of an instructor from your local centre. If possible, this should be a daily activity, or at least once a week when it is a holiday. Even once a week will amount to fifty lessons a year.

10. Find out if your adult, financially independent offspring (for instance, your sons who earn their own income or your daughters who are married) give the monthly donation to the *Jama'at*, subscribe to the periodicals of the *Jama'at*, and participate in other religious initiatives, or not. If you find any shortcomings, try to rectify them yourself. Inform the centre if your own efforts do not succeed.

Wassalam,

Humbly,

Muhammad Ali,

Head of the Lahore Ahmadiyya *Jama'at*

P.S. I will await a response to this letter for two months so that I may know which friends have made what efforts and the results achieved by them.
