

Contents

March 2002, Vol.97, No.3

| | |
|---|----|
| Editorial – An invitation to study the claims of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad – the Promised Messiah. | 3 |
| Comments – Acceptance of the Promised Messiah ^(as) | 4 |
| The future of Life on Earth – Our feature length article looks at the remarkable way Holy Qur’an deals with the scenario of continuous evolution on earth, resulting in the creation of a species belonging to an order higher than man: Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad. | 7 |
| Assessment of Belief (prt IV) – The time appointed for the advent of the Mahdi has arrived. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad ^(as) | 17 |
| Ahmadiyat – A brief introduction to Ahmadiyat: By Bilal Atkinson - UK. | 24 |
| QUESTION & ANSWER: Belief in the Hereafter – Some issues concerning heaven and hell, life after death and re-incarnation are answered. Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad j. | 29 |
| Fasting in Religions – A brief look and comparison at the religious aspects concerning fasting of the major religions. By Dr. Abid Ahmad - UK | 33 |
| Islam for the Modern Woman – A brief look at how Islam have always provided rights for women long before western cultures introduced them. By Mrs Mansoorah Hyder-Muneeb - UK. | 42 |
| Are the mountains Moving like the Clouds? – Mountains may appear to be finally fixed but their motion is similar to the movement of the clouds. A fresh look at the verses of the Holy Qur’an and their current scientific interpretation. By Dr.Mian M Abbas - USA. | 50 |

Chief Editor and Manager
Mansoor Ahmed Shah

Chairman of the Management Board
Naseer Ahmad Qamar

Basit Ahmad.

Bockarie Tommy Kallon

Daud Mahmood Khan

Fareed Ahmad

Fazal Ahmad

Fauzia Bajwa

Mansoor Saqi

Mahmood Hanif

Mansoorah Hyder-Muneeb

Navida Shahid

Sarah Waseem

Saleem Ahmad Malik

Tanveer Khokhar

Special contributors:

Amatul-Hadi Ahmad

Farina Qureshi

Proof-reader:

Shaukia Mir

Design and layout:

Tanveer Khokhar

Publisher:

Al Shirkatul Islamiyyah

Distribution:

Muhammad Hanif

All correspondence should be forwarded directly to:

The Editor

Review of Religions
The London Mosque
16 Gressenhall Road
London, SW18 5QL
United Kingdom

© Islamic Publications, 2002
ISSN No: 0034-6721

Editorial

113 years ago, on 23 March 1889, the Ahmadiyya Muslim community commenced its nascent development at the hands of its Founder, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (1835-1908). He claimed that he had been commissioned by God Almighty as the Promised Messiah and the Promised World Reformer awaited by followers of all revealed religions of the world.

The truth of his claim was to be found in the method prescribed from time immemorial and in the words of the Founder of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim community as follows:

‘If you doubt my claims and wish to know the truth, then it is very easy to remove any doubts because the truth of a prophet might be known in three ways:

First, through reason i.e. when a Prophet or Messenger claims to have come,

consider whether reason affirms that a Prophet or Reformer should appear at that time and whether or not the condition of mankind demands a Reformer.

Second, prophecies of previous Prophets i.e. we should see whether or not any of the past Prophets had prophesied concerning his appearance or concerning the appearance of some Prophet at the time of his advent.

Third, Divine help and heavenly support i.e. it should be considered whether or not the claimant is accompanied by heavenly support.

These three conditions have been laid down from ancient times for discerning the truth of the claims of one commissioned by God. God has had mercy upon you and has established all three conditions in my support and it is up to you to accept me or not. If you want to test from the point of view of reason, then reason is most

certainly pointing out that Muslims stand in need of a Reformer from on high. The state of affairs within and without are both dangerous. It is as if the Muslims stand on the precipice of a cliff or are caught up in an eddy. If you search past prophecies, Prophet Daniel, peace be upon him, has prophesied concerning me and this age and the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him has also said that the Promised Messiah would appear from amongst his followers. If somebody does not know this, he can study the Sahih Bukhari or Sahih Muslim and see the prophecy about the appearance of a Reformer at the beginning of each century. If you want to search for divine help with regards to me, then remember that thousands of signs have manifested themselves in support of my claims.

Amongst those signs is the one written in the Barahini Ahmadiyya 24 years ago and was written when not a single person had any con-

nection with me by having pledged allegiance to me nor did anyone undertake any journey to meet me. That sign is that Allah says that the time is coming when financial help would come towards me from all directions and thousands of people will flock to me. The He adds that people would come in such multitudes that you would be amazed by their numbers, so be not unkind to them nor tire in meeting them.'

(Lecture Sialkot, pp 50,51; Roohani Khazain Vol.20 pp.241,242)

There are millions of people who join this growing community of true believers each year and one of the articles in this edition provides a brief introduction to this dynamic movement. We are privileged that Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad also initiated this magazine, in its centenary year of publication. We invite everyone to study his claims.

Notes & Comments

ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH ^(AS)

by *Basit Ahmed - UK*

Opposition of the non-Ahmadi Muslim to the Ahmaddiyya Community has grown intensely over the last hundred years. However, the greater has been the hostility, the greater has been the progress of the Ahmadiyya Community. The correlation between the advancement of the Ahmadiyya Community and the opposition shown to it by its opponents has been so consistent and apparent that we wonder why it has not been registered by those who oppose it.

Moreover, the past hundred years has also witnessed the decline of the power of Muslim States. At the time of the Promised Messiah, that is the during the latter part of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, the Ottoman Empire was still in existence, though showing signs of degeneration in the sphere of its social and moral values.

Now, the past glory of the Islamic

empires has become nothing but the stuff of memories for the Muslims. Their empires have crumbled, having become subject nations of Western Imperialism and the subsequent independence has been assured only with the support and complicity of the Western powers, who have maintained their political and military hold over these countries. None dare to oppose them. Those who do are quickly cut down.

The plight of the Muslims is sad to see. Currently, although we feel for the anguish of the Palestinians and the injustices they continue to endure, we cannot condone the un-Islamic response to such injustice. Palestinians have reached such a point of desperation that even Palestinian women are prepared to blow themselves up in support of their cause in order to avenge in some small way the tyranny of their rulers, as has been witnessed only

recently. However, in the process it is the lives of innocent men, women and children that are being threatened. Such acts of desperation lead only to ever greater suffering for other innocent Palestinians, since the Israeli government will always take its revenge, 'ten eyes for one eye and ten teeth for one tooth'.

It is regrettable and sad that Muslims who are the followers of such a great Prophet, the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) of Islam, that they seem unable to find support and sustenance from the great teachings and advice of the Holy Founder of Islam. In circumstances such as theirs, where they are without power to resist tyranny with force, they would do well to turn to God and seek justice from Him and Him alone—instead of reacting to injustice with injustice. The Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) advised the rulers to be wary of the prayer of the wronged and the oppressor to be mindful of the All-Seeing God Almighty who helps and supports those who turn to Him. It was He who released the Jews from the clutches of the great Pharaoh and it was the Almighty God who gave the early Muslims victory over

their powerful oppressors. Remember, also the fire that was lit for the Prophet Abraham^(as) and put out by the hand of God. The condition is only that the suffering people should obey the commands of God.

Thus it is that Muslims will find it well nigh impossible to regain their lost power and glory unless they begin to obey the commands of God as prescribed in the Holy Qur'an and made clear by the Holy Prophet Muhammad of Islam^(sa). Consequently, the prophecy of the Holy Prophet^(sa) regarding the appearance at the head of the fourteenth century Hijri of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi needs to be given due care and attention. Until they accept and follow such an Imam promised to the Muslim Umma by God and His Prophet, for Muslims there can be no hope.

It is such an Imam, who in the guise of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) of Qadian, has claimed to be the Reformer of this age. It is he who claims to be the Imam Mahdi and the Promised Messiah for the Muslims. He makes such a claim based on revelation and supports his claim with nothing other than the Holy Qur'an and

the Ahadith. The numerous prophecies made by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) of Qadian that have come true can only provide strength to the believers. They also provide good reason to believe that the many other prophecies made by him for the future would also be fulfilled. For the one who doubts his truth, the fulfilment of his very numerous prophecies should provide ample grounds to accept the truth of his claim to be the Promised Messiah and Mahdi.

The Promised Messiah^(as) was once asked by a non-Ahmadi Muslim:

‘What will be the fate of the Muslims living in Arabia, Syria, Egypt and India, who are opposed to Mirza Sahib— will they ever progress in the world or would they be destroyed?’

The Promised Messiah^(as) replied that [as stated in the Ahadith] at the time of the Messiah only those will be saved who follow the Promised Messiah. Those who reject and oppose him will slowly be wiped out. The remaining few will suffer disgrace like the Jews [who rejected their Messiah]. The Muslims who reject the Promised Messiah will lose their Empires



and Islam will spread swiftly in the West. It will be the people who accept the Promised Messiah and become true Muslims, be they of the West or of the existing Muslim nations, who will rule over Egypt, Syria and India. Then Promised Messiah^(as) further stated that this work is being done by God and it has been decided in the heavens that the Community of the Promised Messiah will spread and no one can halt its progress. ‘Unfortunate are those who have stayed away from our Jama’at. Within three hundred years it will come to pass that the Ahmadi Muslims will replace [the nations of] non-Ahmadi Muslims and the remaining non-Ahmadi Muslims will be of no consequence’, (being so small in number) .

The Future of Life on Earth



This is an extract taken from the book Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth, written by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad.

Does man represent the final stage of development or will there be another creation after man? Is there any possibility of a new species evolving from Homo sapiens with improved or added senses, that is able to perceive new dimensions, with the capacity to develop a higher intelligence? Again, could it be possible for that new species to appear in a completely different form and shape with an entirely new life pattern? To the best of our knowledge, these questions have not been examined as such by any religion other than Islam.

For the philosophers or scholars of previous ages, this was entirely beyond the scope of their intellect. Even modern science can only discuss this issue in a vague way. No serious methodology within a scholastic framework has been developed to examine these possibilities.

It is an amazing distinction of the Holy Qur'an that it raises and resolves such questions and predicts such possibilities. The issue of life after death is different, discussed traditionally by almost all major religions. None, however, has even hypothetically examined the possibility of other forms of life here on earth evolving before or after Doomsday.

Having said that, we beg to remind the reader that although other scriptures also share the description of Doomsday, the Qur'anic terminology is much wider and varied in its application. There are many prophecies in the Qur'an regarding some epoch-making future events like great revolutions and upheavals. All these are referred to by the same term *Al-Qiyamah* or its synonym *Al-sa'ah*. All the same,

these terms also cover that which is commonly understood by the expression 'Doomsday' which indicates the coming to an end of the entire mankind. It is this meaning which is shared by the other scriptures when they speak of Doomsday.

But although the term 'Doomsday' is generally interpreted by the adherents of these religions to be the be-all and end-all of the universe, the Holy Qur'an does not employ the term entirely in the same sense. The earth according to it, is a small part of the vast universe. A great upheaval of gigantic global dimension can create vast destruction, wiping out all life from the face of the earth. Yet, it does not imply that the entire earth itself will be completely annihilated nor can it result in the total annihilation of the entire universe.

Before proceeding further, let us give an outline of what is to come in this chapter in relation to the future of man here on earth, or elsewhere in the other worldly existence, according to the Qur'anic teachings. There are some verses which speak of events to take place in this world, beyond the occurrence of Doomsday. These mention the changing of man's form into something different after death as he is raised into a new life. Then there are verses distinctly apart from them which speak of a future beyond Doomsday, but not in the Hereafter. They clearly present the scenario of continuous evolution here on earth, resulting in the creation of a species belonging to an order higher than man. This latter concept is not to be confused with, or linked to the former, i.e. resurrection after death.

Let us begin with the study of the verses relating to the Hereafter, other than those which discuss the possibility of a completely new form of intellectual life here on earth. Addressing those who are sceptical of the idea of life after death, the Qur'an reminds them that they should be more sceptical of their own existence here on earth than their life after death. One thing which they most certainly know is that they came from nowhere. It was non-existence which preceded them. Having been created from nothing, why should they doubt that they may be created again from something which they now are. The proposition of their being re-born out of what they are today, is evidently far more logical than the

proposition of their materializing out of nothing. This is the import of many verses of the Qur'an on the subject of man's scepticism regarding life after death, but it is merely like the opening of a door for further investigation. In itself, it is never meant to be an argument to prove the existence of life in the hereafter: it is only meant to disprove the justification of scepticism. The Qur'an further reminds man that the high level of consciousness which he has gained should have been a source of light for him rather than that of darkness. His awareness of his surroundings and what lies beyond should have convinced him of the existence of his Creator to whom he raises his head in defiance instead. Yet if he believes in Him his denial of the hereafter could have sprung merely from his amazement - it is far too wonderful to be true. In reality however, his first creation is far more amazing and unbelievable than his second creation.

Turning to a deductive argument, the Qur'an first lays its foundation by declaring that no direct witnessing of the hereafter is possible for humans on earth. Beyond the end of his life, from man's vantage point, nothing can be seen but utter void and emptiness. Look at the wisdom of man: he believes himself to be born out of this total void and does not raise an eyebrow in incredulity. Yet, when he is told that he will rise again after death, he refuses to accept this suggestion as absolutely absurd and senseless. The comparison is so powerful that it does not require a great philosopher to comprehend the strength of this argument.

No better witness therefore, than man himself, can be brought to testify against his own denial. The Holy Qur'an in dealing with this subject first builds precisely and accurately, the viewpoints of the disbelievers in the clearest terms, then it turns to their rebuttal. The following are some of the relevant verses:

وَقَالُوا مَا هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَا إِلَّا
الدَّهْرُ وَمَا لَهُم بِذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ

And they say, 'There is nothing but this our present life; we

die and we live here; and nothing but time destroys us.' But they have no knowledge of that; they do but conjecture.¹
(Ch.45:v.25)

أَبْعَدُكُمْ أَنْكُمْ إِذَا مِتُّمْ وَكُنْتُمْ تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَنْكُمْ تُخْرَجُونَ
هَٰئِهِاتِ هَيِّبَاتٍ لِمَا تُوعَدُونَ ۗ إِنَّ هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا السَّالِفَاتِ
نُمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ ۗ

Does he promise you that when you are dead and have become dust and bones, you will be brought forth again? Far, far from truth is that which you are promised. There is no life other than our present life; we were lifeless and now we live, but we shall not be raised up again.²
(Ch.23:vs.36-38)

وَيَقُولُ الْإِنْسَانُ إِذَا مَا مِتُّ لَسَوْفَ أَخْرَجُ حَيًّا

And says man, 'What! When I am dead, shall I be brought forth alive?'³
(Ch.19:v.67)

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَا يَبْعَثُ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَمُوتُ ۗ بَلَىٰ وَعَدًّا
عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۗ يُبَيِّنُ لَهُمُ السَّبِيلَ
يَخْتَلِفُونَ فِيهِ وَلِتَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كَذِبِينَ

And they swear by Allah their strongest oaths that Allah will not raise up those who die. Nay, He will certainly raise them up a promise He has made binding on Himself, but most people know not. He will raise them up that He may make clear to them that wherein they differed, and that those who disbelieved may know that they were liars.⁴
(Ch.16:vs.39-40)

وَضَرَبَ لَنَا مَثَلًا وَوَسِيَ خَلْقَهُ قَالَ مَنْ يُحْيِي الْعِظَامَ وَهِيَ رَمِيمٌ

And he coins similitudes for Us and forgets his own creation. He says, 'Who can quicken the bones when they are decayed?' (Ch.36:v.79)

أَفَعَيِينَا بِالْخَلْقِ الْأَوَّلِ بَلْ هُمْ فِي نِسْتٍ مِنَ الْخَلْقِ جَدِيدٍ

Have We then become weary with the first creation? Nay, but they are in confusion about the new creation.⁶ (Ch.50: v.16)

وَكَانُوا يَقُولُونَ أَإِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَإِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ
أَوْ آتَاؤُنَا الْأَوَّلُونَ

And they were wont to say, 'What! when we are dead and have become dust and bones, shall we indeed be raised again, 'And our fathers of yore too?'⁷ (Ch.56:vs.48-49)

نَحْنُ قَادِرُونَ بِتِلْكَ الْمَوْتِ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِينَ * عَلَيَّ أَنْ
أَسْئَلَكُمْ أَمْثَالَكُمْ * وَتُنشِئُكُمْ فِي مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ * وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ
النُّشْأَةَ الْأُولَى قَوْلًا تَذَكَّرُونَ *

We ordained death for you and We shall not be prevented. From changing your forms altogether and raise you unto something of which you have no knowledge. And you have certainly learnt as to how you were raised during your first creation, why then do you not contemplate?⁸ (Ch.56:61-63)

Thus the Qur'an facilitates for man his belief in the hereafter, but that is not all the argument there is to it:

مَا خَلَقَكُمْ وَلَا نَعْتَمِكُمْ إِلَّا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَدَّدٌ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ

Your creation and your resurrection are only like the creation and resurrection of a single self. Verily Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.⁹

(Ch.31:v.29)

This is the verse which builds the subject further and opens up a new vista for man's understanding of the life after death.

The phenomenon of resurrection is related to the phenomenon of the birth of each individual. If one visualizes the initial embryonic stage of the fusion of the sperm with the ovum and tries to conceive from that vantage point the end product – the birth of a fully developed child, it would seem impossible to believe that it would happen. Imagine the gigantic transformation from that insignificant fertilized egg into the live and kicking wonder of a baby, delivered at the end of nine months. A viewer who has not witnessed this transformation repeatedly could not at all imagine it to have happened just by looking at the first few stages of fused embryonic cells. Life after death is likened to this amazing process – a transformation from almost nothing to a highly developed and organized form of life.

The difference between the origin of man as a mere bio-unit to what he has become, is a fantastic transformation. It is impossible for the rudimentary life forms to envision the future of evolution culminating in man, even if granted the sense to do so. Their awareness of what they are is so insignificant, that it is extremely difficult for humans to refer to it as awareness. This is a profound statement, so short yet so far-reaching, covering the entire span of evolution from end to end. The message given here is that between you as you exist now, and you at the time of resurrection, the difference will be as vast as the difference between the origin of life on earth and you in your present form. The transformation will be colossal. It is impossible for you to

THE WHOLE UNIVERSE IS BUILT WITH THE TRUTH, SO ALSO IS THE CREATION OF MAN - THE VERY SUMMIT OF CREATION. QUITE DISTINCT FROM THE SUBJECT OF LIFE AFTER DEATH, THE HOLY QUR'AN ALSO SPEAKS OF A DIFFERENT FORM HERE ON EARTH WHICH WILL SUPERSEDE HUMANS:

comprehend the nature of what you may be raised into after death. Yet, you can in no way escape the inevitable conclusion that your first creation is far more unbelievable than the second one that you reject. Perhaps it will take a billion years or so for the resurrected soul to reach its final perfected form of spiritual evolution. We draw this inference because the resurrection is likened unto the first phase of human creation from nothingness. We know now that it took at least one billion years, if not more, for man to evolve from his first ancestral elementary form of life. Hence, if this phase of his creation is similar to the second phase of his resurrection, it is not unlikely that the similarity may also cover the span of time between the first and the second creation.

To prove the point further the Holy Qur'an enters a unique style of deductive logic. We do not plan to fully illustrate this point here with reference to the relevant verses because many of them have already been discussed in other chapters. Here we only want to explain the style of this argument. Speaking of some future events of this world at a time when no human could envisage them, the Qur'an simultaneously begins to speak of the life after death, sometimes in a language which has two concurrent meanings. The prophecies contained in these verses can be read as applicable to here as well as to the Hereafter. When the events of this world, mentioned therein, clearly and irrefutably become realized, the fulfilment of the events of the Hereafter becomes only a matter of time. The same superhuman agency which is proved right with the unfolding of the events of this world must also be trusted concerning that which remains to be fulfilled in matters pertaining to the Hereafter. This is as far as any argument can go regarding the life to come, otherwise it is impossible to prove by any other means before death.

Having discussed the possibility of an evolved form of existence after death, some verses of the Qur'an clearly depict the appearance of a new form of life here on earth, replacing humans and being distinctly different from them.

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ اِنَّ يَشَآءُ يَنْزِعِكُمْ
وَيَاتِ بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيْدٍ * وَمَا ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسْرِيْرٌ *

Seest thou not that Allah created the heavens and the earth in accordance with the requirements of truth (Haq)? If He so pleases, He can remove you and put in your place a new creation. And that is not at all hard for Allah.¹⁰

(Ch.14:vs.20-21)

These verses simply cannot be applied to the case of life after death. The use of the conditional preposition *in* which means *if*, clearly implies that life after death is not intended otherwise this condition would put to doubt the definite existence of the hereafter – while the entire Qur'an speaks of it as an absolute unconditional reality. The verse under discussion does not speak of replacing man with others like him. It clearly mentions the bringing into being of a new creation, *khalq* and speaks of the whole of mankind to be changed into a different entity.

The whole universe is built with the Truth, so also is the creation of man - the very summit of creation. Quite distinct from the subject of life after death, the Holy Qur'an also speaks of a different form here on earth which will supersede humans:

لَخَلْقُ خَلْقِنَهُمْ وَشَدَدُنَا اَسْرَهُمْ * وَاِذَا شِئْنَا بَدَّلْنَا اَمْثَالَهُمْ
تَبْدِيْلًا *

We created them and strengthened their make; and when We will so decide, We will change their form to something completely different.¹¹

(Ch.76:v.29)

And again:

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِرَبِّ الْمَشَارِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ إِنَّا لَقَادِرُونَ عَلَىٰ
أَلَّا نُبَدِّلَ خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْرِقِينَ

But nay! I swear by the Lord of the easts and of the wests, that We have the power to substitute in their place others better than they, and We cannot be frustrated in *Our plans*.¹²
(Ch.70:41-42)

The substitute creation is not mentioned as another nation *qaum* nor as another generation of humans. The conditional use of *if* implies that *if* man reforms himself and begins to behave properly, he may not necessarily be wiped out as a species to make room for another better one.

Thus, the Qur'an raises the possibility of more advanced forms of creation developing, with superior sensory faculties or even new senses in addition to our five. Although the Qur'an does not state that this will definitely happen, yet it affirms God's power to produce such changes as are within His plan. It does not present an idea of blind evolution based on accidental events. This possibility of continuous evolution, as mentioned here, is one of the greatest tributes to the Wisdom and Knowledge of the Qur'an's Author. It further proves that all that has been attributed to the Qur'an in the previous chapters concerning the evolution of life must have been true. Otherwise, it could not have mentioned the possibility of man evolving into another species - a subject not discussed in any other secular or religious literature. Such statements could only be made from a platform of absolute knowledge and certainty.

We may not yet completely grasp the possibilities of our continuing evolution or that of a completely new chain of evolution beginning with a fresh start. Our understanding can only reach the periphery of present knowledge and for us it remains a part of the unseen. However, the unknown is constantly being transformed into that which is known

or understood. This is the natural process of education. God is the Lord of all that is seen and all that is unseen. Gradually He broadens our horizons so that our vision is constantly enlarged with the coming into view of that which previously lay beyond the curtain of darkness.



References

1. Translation of Ch.45:v.25 by Maulawi Sher Ali.
2. Translation of Ch.23:vs.36-38 by Maulawi SherAli.
3. Translation of Ch.19: v.67 by Maulawi Sher Ali.
4. Translation of Ch.16:vs.39-40 by Maulawi Sher Ali.
5. Translation of Ch.36:v.79 by Maulawi Sher Ali.
6. Translation of Ch.50:v.16 by Maulawi Sher Ali.
7. Translation of Ch.56: vs.48-49 by Maulawi Sher Ali.
8. Translation of Ch.56:vs.61-63 by the author.
9. Translation of Ch.31:v.29 by the author.
10. Translation of Ch.14:vs.20-21 by the author.
11. Translation of Ch.76:v.29 by the author.
12. Translation of Ch.70:vs.41-42 by Maulawi Sher Ali.

Assessment of Belief – Part IV

Presented below is a translation of the address delivered by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, the Promised Messiah^(as) and Mahdi, on 31 August 1901 on the occasion of the visit to Qadian of the Municipal Commissioner of Vizirabad, Janab Babu Ghulam Mustafa Sahib. For the purpose of translation, the original Urdu script of this address has been taken from *Malfoozat*, vol. 4, pp.15-20.



The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

In 1891, he claimed, on the basis of Divine revelation, that he was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) and by the scriptures of other faiths.

His claim constitutes the basis of the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

[Translator's Note: All references to the verses of the Holy Qur'an are given in Arabic as they occur in the text. The English translation, presented in Italics is taken from the translation of the Holy Qur'an by Hadhrat Maulvi Sher Ali Sahib^(ra). Where the Promised Messiah^(as) has himself stated a certain interpretation of the Arabic verse, this is incorporated in the main body of the text].

Translated by Amatul Hadi Ahmad

(Continuation of address given on 31 August 1901 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah^(as) and Mahdi)

Without doubt, falsification of God becomes a necessary consequence of rejection of me and my acceptance indicates acceptance of God's Truth and leads to a firm and consolidated belief in the existence of Almighty God. Moreover, rejection of my claim is not merely a falsification of me, it is a falsification of the Holy Prophet

IT IS MY FIRM BELIEF THAT IF A PERSON TURNS TO GOD FOR THE MANIFESTATION OF TRUTH, HAVING PURIFIED HIMSELF OF ALL PREJUDICE AND STUBBORNNESS, FORTY DAYS WOULD NOT PASS BEFORE THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS MADE CLEAR TO HIM. HOWEVER, THERE ARE VERY FEW INDEED WHO SEEK A JUDGEMENT FROM GOD HAVING FULFILLED THESE CONDITIONS AND DUE TO THEIR STUBBORNNESS AND PREJUDICE THEY REJECT A MAN OF GOD, THUS NEGATING THEIR OWN FAITH.

Muhammad^(sa). Hence, before someone now dares to falsify me, he should think deeply and ask for a fatwa from his own heart as to whom exactly is he falsifying.

[The question here arises as to] how it is that the falsification of the Holy Prophet^(sa) is implicit [in falsification of my claim]? It is so in view of the fact that the Holy Prophet^(sa) prophesied the appearance of a Reformer at the head of every century and [rejection of me as the Reformer of the present century] implies that, God forbid, his promise was not fulfilled. Furthermore, the statement of the Holy Prophet^(sa) *Imamukum minkum*, that is, 'your Imam [Mahdi] would be from among you [the Muslims]' would also, God forbid, appear to be incorrect. In addition, the prophecy of a Messiah and Mahdi who would appear at the time of the threat posed by the Cross, would also, God forbid, appear to be false because the threat is

present but the Imam is not. Does it not then follow that a person who chooses not to accept me [as the Reformer of this age] becomes in practice a falsifier of the Holy Prophet^(sa) himself?

I, therefore, say it again and state it clearly that falsification of my claim is no easy matter. Before accusing me of being a *Kafir* [an infidel] such an accuser would have to become a *Kafir* himself and before accusing me of being faithless and misguided, he would have to acknowledge himself as being misguided and disgraced. Before anyone can accuse me of having abandoned the Qur'an and the Hadith, they would themselves have to abandon the Qur'an and the Hadith—and such people would certainly have to abandon the Qur'an and the Hadith. I am the one who is the Verifier and Proof for the Qur'an and the Hadith—I am not misguided. I am the one

who is the Mahdi [that is, one who has been divinely guided]. I am not *Kafir*—in fact, I am the actual proof of *Ana awwal-ul Mo'mineen*, that is, I am first among the believers. I state only that which God has made manifest to me as the truth. He who holds a firm belief in God and believes His Prophet [Muhammad]^(sa) to be true, for such a one it is sufficient as a complete argument based on the truth that he should hear what I have to say, and hearing it remain silent. However, what cure can there be for him who is without any sense of honour or shame and dares to speak [against me]? God will attend to him and his understanding. That is why I wish that you should ponder carefully over this matter for the sake of God and advise your friends to do the same that they should not deal with this matter in haste. They should consider it with sincerity and with a clear mind. You should turn to God and pray for His guidance in this matter that He should make the way of truth abundantly clear. It is my firm belief that if a person turns to God for the manifestation of truth, having purified himself of all prejudice and stubbornness, forty days would not pass before the truth of the matter is made

clear to him. However, there are very few indeed who seek a judgement from God having fulfilled these conditions and due to their stubbornness and prejudice they reject a man of God, thus negating their own faith. This is so because when there is no belief in the fact that there are men who are close to God, who are referred to as *Wali*, then their belief in Prophethood is also negated because a *Wali* [provides a firm link to Prophethood and as such] acts like a 'nail' to the [concept of] Prophethood and, consequently, rejection of a Prophet is a rejection of God and in this way the faith of a person is totally negated.

At this time it is necessary that serious consideration is given to the question as to whether the threat posed by the Cross is such that it represents the prophecy contained in the Qur'anic verse:

وَهُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ
حَدَبٍ يَنْزِلُونَ

They shall hasten forth from every height.

(Ch.21: v.97)

The challenge posed by the Cross is that it is leading astray thousands of people with the help of different forms and methods it has adopted for publicising its message. Now is the time to provide an answer to the question as to what title has been given by the Holy Prophet^(sa) to the Reformer who would meet this challenge? The influence and strength of the 'cross' is ever increasing and its bases are being established all around. Its Missions are being formed and being established in far off lands and it is spread wide to the corners of the earth. Hence, even if there were no other proof, we would have had to acknowledge that at this time there is a grave need for a Reformer who would put out the fire of this tribulation. However, we are eternally grateful to our God that he has not limited the commission that I have been entrusted with merely to the observed needs of the time. For the manifestation of the high esteem and noble status of the Holy Prophet^(sa), God had previously vouchsafed many prophecies for this time from which it is clearly deduced that the one who is to come will have the title of *Masih-e-Ma'oud*, that is, the title of the 'Promised

Messiah', bestowed upon him and the task he would be entrusted with would be *Kasr-e-Saleeb*, that is 'to break the Cross', [in other words to defeat the challenge posed by the Cross]. Consequently, every [Muslim] person who possesses a good and wholesome nature would have to accept here that there is no way out of this argument except to affirm that a divinely guided person should appear and his task should be that of *Kasr-e-Saleeb*. However, the matter that requires further attention here is to consider the use of the phrase *Kasr-e-Saleeb*—what exactly is meant by this phrase, [which, in a literal translation, means 'breaking of the Cross']? When it is stated that the task entrusted to the Promised Messiah would be 'the breaking of the Cross', does it mean that he will break a wooden cross and moreover what will be the purpose or benefit of such an act? It is evident that if [the Promised Messiah] were to go about breaking up wooden crosses, he would be undertaking a task that is not of any great esteem nor can there be any apparent benefit in it. If he did break wooden crosses, the Christians could make crosses of gold, silver and other metals. Moreover, [in history, it has been

the case that when some Christian people accepted Islam, their crosses were broken and leaders such as] Hadhrat Abu Bakr, Salahuddin and Bayazid broke many such crosses. Did they, as a result, become the Promised Messiah? No, they most certainly did not!

Hence, we now know that by the term *Kasr-e-Saleeb* is not meant the wooden cross that some Christians wear round their necks and these are not the crosses that the Promised Messiah is to go around breaking. On the contrary, there is a very deep truth contained in this phrase and that truth is supported by the words of a *Hadith* in which the phrase *Yaza-ul-Harb*, meaning 'he would lift war or end war' has been used. Here, the point that needs to be carefully considered is that on the one hand the task of the Promised Messiah is to bring an end to war such that fighting in the name of religion would be considered impermissible while it is also clear that the time of the Promised Messiah would be a time of peace when there would be rule of a just government. The latter fact in itself supports the point that fighting at that time would be considered impermissible. Consider now the two

aspects [of the prophecies already vouchsafed] that there would be no wars and breaking of the cross would be the task of the Promised Messiah. A careful consideration of these points would reveal the truth of my argument that by 'breaking of the cross' is not meant the physical destruction of the wooden or metallic crosses of the Christians. On the contrary, the use of the term [*Kasr-e-Saleeb*] points to another truth that has been taught by me. I have openly proclaimed that *jihad*, that is, fighting for religion, is no longer permissible—it is not permissible because one of the tasks of the Promised Messiah is to end war. If breaking of the cross is the task of the Promised Messiah so is ending of war. In view of the task of ending war, it was necessary that I, [as the Promised Messiah] should issue the *fatwa* of religious war now being impermissible. Hence, I state that at the present time raising the sword or any other weapon of war in the name of religion is impermissible and is a grave sin.

I feel deep regret when I hear of incidents taking place almost every day in the region of the Frontier which are nothing but acts undertaken for financial gain

but in so doing they not only disgrace the name of Islam, they also interfere in the peace of the land. A true Muslim should not have any sympathy for such unruly and unprincipled people.

In view of the above, what then is to be the meaning of the term *Yaksar-as-Saleeb*, that is, 'he would break the cross'? The answer to this should be paid very careful attention. The time of appearance of the Promised Messiah was to be the time of widespread power of the Cross and he was to be appointed to break the [power of the] Cross. The meaning is very clear—that the purpose of the appearance of the Promised Messiah was to be the total falsification of the religion of the Christians [who worshipped the Cross instead of the one true God]. The Promised Messiah was to bring wisdom, supported and strengthened by divine signs, such that the truth and logic of his argument would be complete, leaving no room for doubt. He would thus prove the worship of the Cross to be a falsehood in such a manner that it would become evident to the world and thousands upon thousands of souls would acknowledge that in reality the

Christian religion is not a religion that can become the source of mercy for human beings. This is the reason for all my attention being focused on the 'Cross' and is there any doubt still remaining in the defeat of the 'Cross'? The issue of the death of the Messiah alone has 'broken the Cross' into smithereens because when it has been proved that the Messiah did not even die on the Cross and that he died a natural death in Kashmir, having journeyed to that land, then some wise person should tell us what remains of the Cross after this!

If prejudice and stubbornness has not totally darkened the heart of a person and rendered his mind unable to discern, then even a Christian would have to admit that with this issue the whole of the Christian religion becomes totally untenable.

In short, [from the previous prophecies] this much is very clear that God was to appoint the Promised Messiah at a time when the Cross would have supreme power which means that the challenge posed by the religion of the Cross would be at its height. For the spread of this religion, there would be employed all

forms and methods of publicising their teachings. There would be spread in the world the *zulm* [injustice], a word that also has the meaning of 'darkness', that would be spread through *shirk*, that is worship of things other than God the Almighty. At such a time, God was to appoint a person whose task would be to purify the world of such darkness and to save it from the acts of worship of the dead and worship of the Cross. Such acts have the consequence of distancing man from God—it is in this sense that the Promised Messiah was to 'break the Cross'

The two tasks of the Promised Messiah may appear to be contradictory in that he is to end war as well as 'to break the Cross' when 'breaking of the Cross' would in itself require war. However, such a contradiction is present only for shallow minded people who have clearly not understood the purpose of the appointment of the Promised Messiah. The term *Yaza-ul-harb* in itself reveals the true nature of the term *Kasr-e-Saleeb* that it cannot imply the breaking up of crosses made of wood or other materials—it refers to the defeat of the people of the Cross.

Moreover, this defeat is to be a clear and evident defeat through clear argument based on truth as God has stated in the Holy Qur'an:

وَيُجِيبُ مَنْ حَىٰ عَنْ بَيْتِهِ

So that he who had already perished through a clear sign may perish.
(Ch.8: v.3)

In any case, our opponents are given to making great exaggerations on this issue. If they were to consider this matter with a cool head and with a firm belief that they would one day face God, they most certainly would have followed me, realising that the head of the century was upon them. Nineteen years have now passed since the start of the fourteenth century [of the Islamic calendar]—and it is essential that a Reformer of this century should appear. otherwise [God forbid] the Holy Prophet(sa) would appear to be falsified [as it was he who had prophesied the appearance of a Reformer at the head of every century].



Ahmadiyyat

By Bilal Atkinson - UK

The name Ahmadiyyat indicates the renaissance of the religion of the Holy Qur'an and is a re-statement presented under Divine guidance by the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement. The names Ahmadi and Ahmadiyyat are meant only to distinguish Ahmadi Muslims from other Muslims who still await the Promised Mahdi and Messiah. Ahmadi Muslims believe the Founder of their Community to be the Promised Messiah^(as).

Today, the followers of all the great religions of the world are awaiting the second coming of their founders. Will the message and function of every one of them be identical? Or, will each of them have his own message, different to and in conflict with the messages of the other great teachers in their Second Advent? If the messages of all of them are to be identical, then not more than one would be needed to convey that message and to set an example in conformity with it. If the messages were to be conflicting, the advent of so

many teachers, instead of promoting unity, peace, accord and spiritual fulfillment, would only foster hostility, discord, enmity and chaos.

The Holy Qur'an, like the Holy Books of other faiths, contains grand prophecies of the appearance of a universal teacher and reformer in these latter days, who will revive and rejuvenate belief in God and bring about unity, peace and spiritual fulfillment. The Muslims, like the Christians, were looking forward to the return of the Messiah and also the advent of the Mahdi. The Buddhists were expecting Buddha and the Hindus were expecting the return of Krishna. All these prophecies were to find their fulfillment in the advent of one person. For God is One, truth is indivisible and guidance for mankind and the remedy for the ills of the age must be uniform, comprehensive and consistent.

In 1835, in the village of Qadian, in the Punjab area of India, was born a boy named Ghulam

Ahmad^(as), who in later life was hailed as the Reformer of the age by many Muslim scholars. The child was no ordinary child. His parents were Muslim and he grew up to be no ordinary Muslim. From early life, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) had been deeply interested in the study and service of Islam. Often he met Christians, Hindus and Sikhs in public debate and spoke and wrote about them. This made all religious communities interested in him and he became well known to the leaders of the communities.

All of them, Sikh, Hindu Christian and Muslim, agreed that he had always led a blameless life, had shown the utmost kindness and consideration to others and had been consistently truthful and honest in all his dealings. He was universally trusted. In short, those who knew him knew him as the most honourable and trustworthy person, one who would never compromise with truth and justice. Though Christians, Hindus and Sikhs strongly disagreed with him on religious matters, they testified to the purity of his personal life and character. Even great Islamic scholars looked upon him as the Champion of Islam.

Hadhrat Ahmad^(as) began to receive revelation from God Almighty at an early age and as time passed his experience of revelation multiplied progressively. Every one of his revelations was clearly fulfilled according to its due time, some relating to future events, still await fulfillment. His announcement of being the Mahdi and Messiah in late 1890 was published throughout the world and his claim was received, as has always been the case of the Divine Reformers such as Jesus and Muhammad, peace be upon them, with widespread opposition. Prior to his announcement of being the Promised Messiah^(as), God Almighty assured him with the revelation:

'I shall carry thy message to the ends of the Earth'

This revelation set forth assurances of Divine support and the progressive spread of the Movement initiated by him within the body of Islam. In obedience to God's command, Hadhrat Ahmad^(as) claimed to be the Messiah for the Christians, the Mahdi for the Muslims, and Krishna for the Hindus etc. In short, he was the Promised



The Promised Messiah^(as)

Prophet of every nation and was appointed to unite all mankind under the banner of one faith. Muhammad^(sa), the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) was a universal prophet with a universal teaching and this man Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) who claimed to be the Promised Messiah, also claimed to be subordinate to and a reflection of Muhammad, the Seal of all the Prophets.

Describing the object of his advent the Promised Messiah^(as) said:

‘The task for which God has appointed me, is that I should, by removing the obstacles which have been set up between man and his Maker, re-establish in the hearts of men, love and devotion to God and by making manifest the truth, should put an end to all religious wars and strife, and thus lay the foundation of abiding peace and should acquaint mankind with the spiritual truths which it had forgotten and should demonstrate to the world the true spiritual life which had been displaced by material desires and should, in my own life, manifest those divine powers with which man has been endowed, but which can be manifest only through prayer and devotion and above all, that I should permanently re-establish the bright pure Unity of God, purified from all polytheistic ideas which had entirely disappeared from the hearts of men.’

(Lecture on Islam, p.34)

The Promised Messiah^(as) stressed the cultivation of moral and spiritual qualities and conforming to them strictly in every sphere of life. The result was that he succeeded in building up a community whose members, under his instructions and following his example, illustrate in their daily lives the beneficence of Islamic teachings according to their faculties and capacities. The patterns and traditions established by him have become like the natural texture of their lives, so that it might be said that the Community founded by him is today the only one that illustrates in the lives of the greater part of its members, the true purpose of human life and the manner of its achievement.

After the death of the Promised Messiah^(as) in 1908, Ahmadi Muslims have elected his Successors or Khalifas. Khilafat is a great Divine blessing, which follows a prophet and brings about solidarity, cohesion and unity among the believers. The Khalifa is the spiritual and administrative Head of the Ahmadiyya, Movement in Islam. The present Supreme Head of the World-wide Ahmadiyya Community, Hadhrat

Mirza Tahir Ahmad, is based in London and was elected as the fourth Khalifa of the Promised Messiah^(as) in 1982. He is spiritually gifted and divinely guided, full of knowledge, wisdom and humility. His knowledge of history and the Muslim world spring from a lifelong study of Islam. He is a widely travelled man and a keen observer of other cultures and societies. He has delivered countless lectures on religious topics and has answered many thousands of questions on key issues of the contemporary age.

With the guidance of the Khalifa, the community has always remained at the forefront of the service and welfare of humanity. It has established many schools, hospitals and clinics in many countries. In these hospitals the poor and less well off are treated free of charge. At times of natural disasters and calamities throughout the world, the community has always worked on a voluntarily basis and helped the affected, both financially and physically, irrespective of their faith colour or creed and will, God willing, continue to do so. The Community has also established its own global satellite television station, MTA Inter-

national, and broadcasts twenty-four hours per day in several languages. This service is provided free of charge to any viewer. In whichever country they reside, Ahmadi Muslims obey the laws of that land and are faithful to that land and to the people of the land.

This world, which has seen so much tragedy during the last century and is facing further tragedies at the moment, is on the brink of a catastrophe, which is sure to take place, due to greed, selfishness, prejudice and most importantly because of lack of true and absolute justice.

The Promised Messiah^(as) has guided the people of these latter days, on how we should conduct ourselves within our worldwide communities in order to attain peace and harmony. The Promised Messiah^(as) has said:

‘My advice to you is that you should become a model of every virtue. You should neither be negligent in doing your duty to God nor you should be negligent in doing your duty to your fellow beings.’

(Malfoozat Vol. II, p.298)

The Promised Messiah^(as) was told that his message would reach all corners of the earth. From such a remote area, Ahmadiyyat has, by the Grace of God, spread to more than 170 countries of the world and its population is ever expanding; so much so that 80 million people entered the fold of Ahmadiyyat last year. I myself accepted Ahmadiyyat more than 14 years ago and I have never regretted it for one moment; indeed, I thank God every day for leading me to the universal teaching that is Islam. I was not attracted to it by force, because you cannot force a heart to love. I was attracted by the beautiful teachings of Islam and the people who put those teachings into practice and who call themselves Ahmadi Muslims.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community believes it is an embodiment of the true Islam. It seeks to unite mankind with its Creator and to establish peace at both individual and collective levels. I commend it to those who seek the true meaning of life.



Belief in the Hereafter

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, the Fourth Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, from time to time offers to people of all nationalities, faiths and beliefs the opportunity of asking questions and raising issues that are of interest to them. Presented below are answers to questions that were asked in a session held in London, on 25 February, 1998.

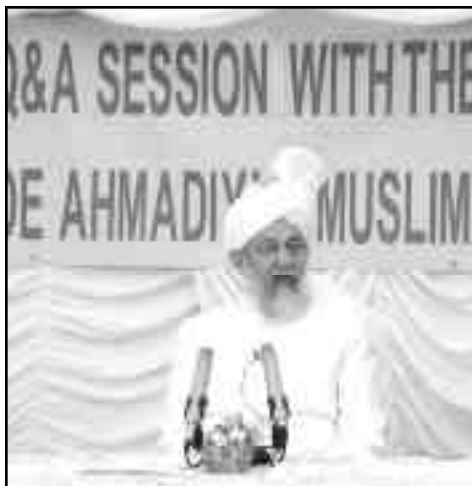
Prepared by Amatul Hadi Ahmad

QUESTIONER

Could you, please, explain the concept of heaven and hell—where are they and what are their characteristics?

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad:

In what terms would you describe the concept of waves that exist all around us? Are you able to touch them? Are you able to smell them or feel them in any way when it is a fact that this room is filled with thousands of such waves which can be received by television or radio and other similar instruments. However, one cannot deny their existence simply because one is unable to actually see them without the aid



of special instruments, even though they belong to the four dimensions that we know of here on earth. Moreover, scientists have begun to understand and believe in the existence of things that are of yet different dimensions.

According to the Holy Qur'an which was revealed about fourteen hundred years ago, this was exactly the concept of heaven and hell presented to the world. It is amazing that the Holy Qur'an speaks of *Jannah*, that is heaven or paradise, as occupying the whole of the universe. It was amazing for a book of fourteen hundred years ago to have declared that the heaven or paradise is everywhere, even at

'WE BELIEVE IN LIFE AFTER DEATH AS AN ESSENTIAL AND INTEGRAL PART OF OUR BELIEF. IF ONE DOES NOT BELIEVE IN LIFE AFTER DEATH, ONE DOES NOT BELIEVE IN ANYTHING'.

the places which people of that age occupied. It was so extraordinary a declaration for the people of that time who had very limited understanding of the universe, that one of the Companions of the Holy Prophet^(sa) stood up and raised a question. His question was posed in a very different but interesting way. He asked that if paradise is spread all over the universe, where then is hell? The Holy Prophet^(sa) was so enlightened by Allah that he understood the concept of different dimensions otherwise he could not have given the answer, which he gave. He replied that 'hell is also present here in the same universe but you can not understand'. Indeed the people of that time were not able to understand such a notion but the man of today can understand this to a degree that if there are things possessing differing dimensions, they can coexist in the same, so called, space. They do not interfere with each other and they do not relate to each other. It is as if one exists and the

other does not but they can still coexist. This is the idea of heaven and hell that has been presented in the Holy Qur'an.

QUESTIONER

Do you believe that there is life after death? Belief in life after death is central to the Christian faith. What form does spiritual life take?

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad:

We believe in life after death as an essential and integral part of our belief. If one does not believe in life after death, one does not believe in anything. This is so because not believing in the hereafter gives license to do whatever one likes here on earth and death is seen as a road to redemption.

Whatever crime is committed here by a person, if he does not believe in the hereafter, he will not see himself as being answerable to anyone and in this way it

is his road to redemption. A criminal may have murdered hundreds of people and at times, by exploding bombs, one person can be responsible for killing thousands of innocent people. When he is hanged or other forms of capital punishment need to be applied only once, he cannot be hanged a hundred times or a thousand times. Hence he gets away with all the damage he has done in life. This is the reason why in Islam there is such a great emphasis on the belief in the hereafter and that is why, as I have stated before, all the divinely revealed religions do pay special importance to the question of life after death.

The ideas may, however, differ and the ideas may become greatly distorted because it is the case that people do not wish to be punished for long. For instance, many Jewish people believe that if they are punished at all they will be punished for three days and that will be all. This is a wish on their part but God does not follow human wishes.

Allah knows best whom He would forgive and whom He will not, but generally speaking, a man who has lived a life of sin here on

‘THE BELIEF IN LIFE AFTER DEATH, IN MY VIEW, IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IS A REALITY. IF IT WERE NOT A REALITY, THEN RELIGION WOULD NOT BE A REALITY—IT WOULD BE MEANINGLESS’.

earth, unless forgiven by God, would face a punishment that will be an extension of his life here on earth. It is the case that such people are given numerous chances and options during their life to turn to God and to abandon their evil way. These options appear before them repeatedly but if they continue to ignore the voice of their conscience and continue to live a life of sin, how should they be dealt with? Despite the numerous chances and opportunities they are granted, they do not return to a life of goodness and in such a case we can say that death ended their vicious life—a life that may have continued in its evil ways till eternity had they been permitted to live for an eternity.

Hence, the belief in life after death, in my view, is of great

importance and its significance is a reality. If it were not a reality, then religion would not be a reality—it would be meaningless.

QUESTIONER

What is the Islamic view about re-incarnation? Does our spirit exist before we are born? If so, can it choose its parents?

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad:

We do not believe in re-incarnation in any form. We do not believe that souls live with God permanently and eternally. This is a Hindu mythology and the western people tend to believe in it only because they do not fully understand this mythology. They wish to be able to live and re-live among their friends and relatives. This desire is wishful thinking on their part and it leads them to want to believe in this mythology. There are no souls existing independently—all the souls occupy a body and are born of the body that we have here. However, once they leave the body, then they go to God. They do not have any choice to return to this earth. They go to God and He decides as to how they are to be judged in accordance with the

acts performed here on earth. Hence, there is no return from the hereafter.

This is the belief that Jesus^(as) held —this is the belief that all the divinely revealed religions hold. Against this, the rest is just mythology and wishful thinking—that is all.



Fasting in Religions

By Dr. Abid Ahmad - UK

Fasting is the practice of abstaining from food, either completely or partially, for a specified period. It is an ancient practice found in most religions of the world. Recent scientific research suggests that fasting is healthy for a person and when engaged in carefully, may bring about heightened states of consciousness and sensibility. Traditionally, fasting has been a widely used practice observed for the purpose of purifying the person or of atoning for sins and wrongdoing. Most religions designate certain days or seasons as times of fasting for their adherents. Prayer is supposed to accompany fasting in most religions.

Fasting is also an excellent form of training for the physical, moral and spiritual development of man. Although fasting exists in some form or another in most world religions, none of the other faiths attach so much importance to it as Islam. According to the Holy Qur'an, fasting had been commanded in religions prior to

Islam. So which are these religions and how does the fasting compare to that undertaken in Islam?

'O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil.'
(Ch.2: v.184)

Fasting in Christianity

The subject of fasting in Christianity is very difficult to discuss, simply because Christianity as a whole is short on religious laws. Besides, there is fundamental disagreement among the scholars to whether Jesus^(as) commanded fasting. Fasting in Christianity seems to have changed with time and is affected by social, political, and economic factors.

Lent is the period of fasting for 40 days and penitence traditionally observed by Christians in preparation for Easter. The historical significance of the forty days may be traced to the time of

the prophets Moses^(as) and Elias who, only approached God on Sinai and Horeb after purifying themselves by a fast of forty days. (Exodus 24:18, Kings 19:18).

Jesus fasted 40 days (Matthew 4:2) before starting his preaching. He would also have fasted on the Day of Atonement, which was an established tradition in Judaism. There are traditions of fasting which differ greatly according to the country in which Christians live. Some abstain from meat, while others from fish. Some will not eat fruits, eggs or luxury foods; some just fast on white bread. Some will abstain from all these items. The intake of fluids is allowed during the fast.

Fasting in Christianity is particularly linked with self-humiliation in repentance (I Kings 21:27, Psalms 35:13). It is also brought into a close connection with prayer (Matthew 17:21) especially in the seeking of God. Christians also view fasting as a time of temptation (Matthew 4:1) and therefore of testing with a view to gaining greater strength.

The Bible also warns of the dangers of fasting. The fast may

be regarded by some as a means of getting things from God (Isaiah 58:3). Fasting may be substituted for genuine repentance (Isaiah 58:5) and become a mere convention (Zechariah 7:5). Fasting also performed the wrong way may be seen as a parade of religion or an act of showing off (Matthew 6:16-18), which should never be the true intention of any fast.

Fasting in Judaism

Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) is the holiest day of the Jewish year. Yom Kippur is a day of 'self-denial' (Leviticus 23-27) so that Jews may be cleansed of their sins. It is observed eight days after Rosh Hashanah (start of the Jewish New Year). It is believed that on Rosh Hashanah God inscribes all of the Jews names in the 'books', and on Yom Kippur the judgement entered in these books is sealed. Yom Kippur is, essentially, the Jews last chance to demonstrate repentance and change the judgement.

Yom Kippur is the only fast day decreed in the Torah. It is a complete 25-hour fast beginning before sunset on the evening before Yom Kippur and ending after nightfall on the day of Yom

THE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLE BEHIND FASTING IN HINDUISM IS FOUND IN AYURVEDA. THIS ANCIENT INDIAN MEDICAL SYSTEM STATES THE BASIC CAUSE OF MANY DISEASES IS THE ACCUMULATION OF TOXIC MATERIALS IN THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM. REGULAR CLEANSING OF TOXIC MATERIALS KEEPS ONE HEALTHY. BY FASTING, THE DIGESTIVE ORGANS GET REST AND ALL BODY MECHANISMS ARE CLEANSED AND CORRECTED. A COMPLETE FAST IS GOOD FOR HEALTH.

Kippur. Jews are supposed to refrain from eating and drinking all fluids. It is a day set aside to 'afflict the soul,' to atone for the sins of the past year.

On Yom Kippur the focus is on spiritual elevation. One way to do this is to abstain from food, work, material possessions, and superficial pleasures. More specifically, five physical activities forbidden on Yom Kippur are eating and drinking, marital relations, washing, wearing leather shoes and applying lotions.

According to the Talmud, eating the day before Yom Kippur is a blessing equal to the blessing of fasting on the day of Yom Kippur. The festive meal before the fast is called Seudah Mafseket (final meal). Meat is not eaten during this meal, but poultry can be eaten. It is traditional to have soup, but important to put as

little salt and seasoning in the soup as possible. Most Jews break the fast with dairy food. Family and friends often break the fast together at someone's home.

Fasting in Hinduism (including Buddhism and Jainism)

Buddhism and Jainism were both founded around 500BC in India and can be regarded as off-shoots from Hinduism. Hence the fasting in these three religions is very similar.

Fasting in Hinduism indicates the denial of the physical needs of the body for the sake of spiritual gains. According to the scriptures, fasting helps create an atonement with the gods by establishing a harmonious relationship between the body and the soul. This is thought to be imperative for the well-being of a human being as it nourishes both physical and spiritual demands.

Hindus believe it is not easy to pursue the path of spirituality in one's daily life. Worldly indulgences do not allow Hindus to concentrate on spiritual attainment. Therefore worshippers must strive to impose restraints on themselves to get the mind focused and one form of restraint is fasting. However, fasting is not only a part of worship, but a great instrument for self-discipline too. It is a training of the mind and the body to endure and harden up against all hardships, to persevere under difficulties and not give up. According to Hindu philosophy, food means gratification of the senses and to starve the senses is to elevate them to contemplation. Hinduism teaches that when the stomach is full, the intellect begins to sleep, wisdom becomes mute and the parts of the body restrain from acts of righteousness.

Hindus fast on certain days of the month such as Purnima (full moon) and Ekadasi (the 11th day of the fortnight). Certain days of the week are also marked for fasting, depending on individual choices and on one's favourite god and goddess. On Saturday, people fast to appease the god of that day, Shani or Saturn. Some

fast on Tuesdays the auspicious day for Hanuman, the monkey God. On Fridays devotees of the goddess Santoshi Mata abstain from taking anything citric. Fasting at festivals is common. Hindus all over India observe fasts on festivals like Shivratri and Karwa Chauth. Navaratri is a festival when people fast for nine days. Hindus in West Bengal fast on Ashtami, the eighth day of the festival of Durga Puja.

Fasting in Hinduism can also mean abstaining from taking certain things, either for religious reason or for the sake of good health. For instance, some people refrain from taking salt on particular days. It is common knowledge that excess salt causes high blood pressure. Another common kind of fast (known as phalahar) is to forego taking cereals and only fruits are eaten.

The underlying principle behind fasting in Hinduism is found in Ayurveda. This ancient Indian medical system states the basic cause of many diseases is the accumulation of toxic materials in the digestive system. Regular cleansing of toxic materials keeps one healthy. By fasting, the digestive organs get rest and all

ISLAM RADICALISED THIS DOOM AND GLOOM CONCEPT OF FASTING, INTO AN ENLIGHTENED CONCEPT OF SELF PURIFICATION. THE MONTH OF FASTING IN ISLAM IS A MONTH OF WORSHIP MUSLIMS WELCOME EACH YEAR WITH ENERGY AND HAPPINESS. THIS IS CONTRARY TO THE ATMOSPHERE OF MOURNING.

body mechanisms are cleansed and corrected. A complete fast is good for health. Additionally, since the human body, as explained by Ayurveda, is composed of 80% liquid and 20% solid, like the earth, the gravitational force of the moon affects the fluid contents of the body. It causes emotional imbalances in the body, making some people tense, irritable and violent. Fasting acts as antidote, for it lowers the acid content in the body which helps people to retain their sanity.

From a matter of dietary control, fasting has come to be a handy tool of societal control. It is a non-violent form of protest (Gandhi often fasted as a means of peaceful protest). A hunger strike can draw attention to a grievance and can bring about a remedy. The pains of hunger that one experiences during fasting make one think and extend one's sympathy towards the destitute who often go without food. In this

context fasting functions as a societal gain wherein people share with each other a similar feeling of hunger. Fasting provides an opportunity for the privileged to give food to the less privileged.

Fasting in Sikhism

Sikhs do not participate in any form of fasting, as they regard it as a pointless act with no benefit. It is worth pointing out that the Sikh founder, Guru Nanak was actually a Muslim, who did regularly fast. It wasn't until the 10th Guru or successor of the Sikh faith, Guru Gobind Singh came into power in 1675, that fasting was dropped from the practices of Sikhism.

COMPARISON TO FASTING IN ISLAM

Islam, has taken the lead in reforming the institution of fasting. This was a radical reform in the meaning, rules and purpose of the fast. It made the fast easy, natural and effective. Fasting was a symbol of sadness, mourn-

Fasting in Religions

| RELIGION | WHEN THEY FAST | HOW THEY FAST | WHY THEY FAST |
|-------------------------|---|---|--|
| Bahai | During Ala, the 19th month of the Baha'i year, March 2-20. | Abstain from food and drink from sunrise to sunset. | To focus on love of God and spiritual matters. |
| Buddhist | Catholics fast on Ash Wednesday, all Fridays in Lent, and Good Friday. Catholics were forbidden to eat meat on all Fridays, but since the mid-1960s, Friday fasting has been a matter of local discretion. | On Ash Wednesday & Good Friday, 2 small meals and 1 regular meal are allowed; meat is forbidden. On Fridays in Lent, no meat is allowed. For the optional Friday fast, some people substitute a different penance or special prayer instead of fasting. | Teaches control of worldly desires, penance for sins, and solidarity with the poor. The Lenten fast prepares the soul for a great feast by practising discipline. The Good Friday fast commemorates the day Christ suffered. |
| Catholic | Several fast periods, Lent, Apostles' Fast, Dormition Fast, and the Nativity Fast. Several 1-day fasts. Every Wed and Fri is considered a fast day, except those that fall during designated 'fast-free weeks.' | In general, meat, dairy products and eggs are prohibited. Fish is prohibited on some fast days and allowed on others. | Strengthens resistance to greediness; helps open a person to God's Grace. |
| Eastern Orthodox | Several fast periods, Lent, Apostles' Fast, Dormition Fast, and the Nativity Fast. Several 1-day fasts. Every Wed and Fri is considered a fast day, except those that fall during designated 'fast-free weeks.' | In general, meat, dairy products and eggs are prohibited. Fish is prohibited on some fast days and allowed on others. | Strengthens resistance to greediness; helps open a person to God's Grace. |
| Hindu | Commonly practised on New Moon days & during festivals such as Shivaratri, Saraswati Puja, and Durga Puja. Women in N. India also fast on the day of Karva Chauth. | Depends on the individual. Fasting may involve 24 hours of complete abstinence from any food or drink, but is more often an elimination of solid foods, with an occasional drink of milk or water. | A way to enhance concentration during meditation or worship; purification for the system; sometimes considered a sacrifice. |
| Jewish | Yom Kippur is the best-known fast day. The Jewish calendar has 6 other fast days as well, including Tisha B'Av, the day on which the destruction of the Jewish Temple took place. | On Yom Kippur and Tisha B'Av, eating and drinking are forbidden for a 25-hour period, from sundown to sundown. On the other fast days, eating and drinking are forbidden only from sunrise to sundown. | Atonement for sins and/or special requests to God. |
| Mormon | The first Sunday of each month is a fast day. Individuals, families, or wards may hold other fasts at will. | Abstaining from food and drink for 2 consecutive meals and donating food or money to the needy. After the fast, church members participate in a 'fast and testimony meeting.' | Closeness to God, concentration on God and religion. Individual or family fasts might be held to petition for a specific cause, such as healing the sick or help with making a difficult decision. |

| RELIGION | WHEN THEY FAST | HOW THEY FAST | WHY THEY FAST |
|-------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Muslim | Ramadhan is a mandatory fasting period. Muslims may perform optional fasts on any other days of the year except on Eid day. Some Muslims fast on Mondays and Thursdays because Muhammad ^(sa) was said to do this, and some fast the 6 days after Eid-ul-Fitr. | Abstain from food, drink and martial rights from before the break of dawn until sunset. This is done for all 29 or 30 days of Ramadhan. Optional fasts are governed by the same rules. | Helps train the mind and body, encourages prayer, reading of the Qur'an and giving money to the poor, helps refrain from evil, liberates the spirit to detach from worldly affairs to increase ones faith and develop a closer relationship with God, restores ones health. |
| Pagan | No organised fast days, but some pagans choose to fast in preparation for Ostara (Spring Equinox). | At the discretion of the individual. Some totally abstain from food, others reduce how much they eat. | Intended to purify a person energetically; used to raise vibrational levels as preparation for magical work. Ostara fasting is used to cleanse oneself from heavier winter foods. |
| Protestant Evangelical | At the discretion of individuals, churches, organisations, or communities. | Though some people abstain from food or drink entirely, others drink only water or juice, eat only certain foods, skip certain meals, or abstain from temptations, edible or | not.Fast for spiritual nourishment, solidarity with impoverished people, a counterbalance to modern consumer culture, or to petition God for special needs. |
| Protestant Mainline | Small part of the tradition, but fasts can be held at the discretion of communities, churches, other groups, and individuals. | Discretion of those fasting. | For spiritual improvement or to advance a political or social-justice agenda. |
| Sikhism | Never | Not Applicable | View it as a pointless act with no benefit |

ing, atonement for the sins, a reminder of disasters as well as self-mortification in Judaism and Christianity. Islam radicalised this doom and gloom concept of fasting, into an enlightened concept of self purification. The month of fasting in Islam is a month of worship Muslims welcome each year with energy and happiness. This is contrary to the atmosphere of mourning.

The Islamic laws that govern fasting are fair and universal. For example, fasting was for special classes of people in the previous religions. For the Brahmin class in the Hindu religion, fasting is mandatory only for the high priests. In some Latin religions, it is only women who must fast and there are no exceptions. Islam has made fasting for all adults irrespective of social class or status.

The tradition of sehri (meal before the fast starts) is a good example of Islam making the fast easy for people. One who is fasting is allowed eat food until just a few minutes before morning prayer. Similarly, when it is time to break the fast, the rule is to break as soon as the sun sets, with no delay. Sleeping and resting during the day are all allowed. Working is not stopped and businesses are not closed down for the fast. In Judaism, working during the period of fast is prohibited. Additionally, a person who makes a mistake in fasting is not punished, and the one who forgets and eats is forgiven.

...Allah desires ease for you and He desires not hardship for you....
(Ch.2:v.186)

Fasting in some other religions is based on a solar (Gregorian) calendar. This demands vast knowledge of calculation and astronomy in the making of a calendar. Besides, the months are fixed in a specific season, they do not rotate or change. Fasting in Islam is based on the lunar calendar and is tied to the sightings of the new moon. Allah states:

They ask thee about the new moons. Say: They are means for measuring time, for the general convenience of people...
(Ch.2:v.190)

And the hadith: 'Eat until you see the crescent and break not until you see the crescent. If it is cloudy calculate the period of the month.' (*Sahih Muslim*)

This enables Muslims in every corner of the earth, east and west, north and south, and all in between, in remote villages, on mountains, in conditions of illiteracy or literacy, in jungles or deserts to start and end the fast all at the same time, without difficulty. Why the moon instead of the sun as the basis for starting and ending the fast? There are several reasons:

The lunar year is always ten or eleven days less compared to the solar. Thus, if Ramadhan 2001 began on November 17th, Ramadhan in 2002 would begin around November 6th. Consequently, in the course of 36 years, every Muslim would have fasted every day of the year, the short days of the year, the long days of the year, the hot days and

the cold days of the year. Muslims in different regions of the world would have had total equality in the number of days they fasted, and would have had an equal amount of seasonal and climatic changes. They would have an equal amount of cold or mild weather Ramadhans. If the fast were based on the solar calendar, the Muslims in hot summer climates would have Ramadhan during hot weather every year, forever. Some Muslims would have fasted long days while others short days, because solar calendar months are fixed and immobile. Additionally, fasting based on the solar system means one may miss certain fruits vegetables in certain seasons, but by the end of the circle a Muslim would have tasted and tried different fruits during Ramadhan, whereas fasting based on the solar calendar would have prohibited some fruits during Ramadhan, forever. This is why Muslims did not change the month of Ramadhan, nor did they distort it by increasing or decreasing days, nor did they change it to different months.

Conclusion

Throughout history, in almost all religions of the world, fasting has

long been promoted as a spiritual means for intensifying prayers and faith. People have fasted as it is an obligation to God, leading to good health and spirituality. Fasting brings great spiritual, mental, emotional and physical health. Fasting is now generally accepted as an effective and safe method of detoxifying the body, a technique that men have used for centuries to heal the sick. It purifies the body of the accumulated toxic poison and waste. Fasting regularly, helps the body heal itself as well as awakening the mind and soul. Fasting is now medically proven to be a healthy act and offers numerous benefits to us, some which we know about and some we don't. As Allah says:

...And fasting is good for you, if you only knew.

(Ch.2:v.185)



Islam for the Modern Woman

By Mrs Mansoorah Hyder-Muneeb - UK

Islam is for the modern woman and she actually came into existence with the advent of Islam some 1500 years ago. It may surprise you that it is through Islam that a woman can become modern and attain her full rights, rights which unfortunately others are still fighting for even today.

The common image of a Muslim woman is that of a suppressed woman, forced into a marriage she did not agree with, tied to the whims and dictates of her masterly husband and extended family, not allowed to be educated nor allowed to voice an opinion, nor allowed to leave the home without the veil and make-up totally forbidden. But let me clarify, this is not the true image of a woman of Islam.

What attracts a woman to Islam is simply that Islam is the only religion that gives true equality - true freedom and - rights.

As far back as the ancient history of the Greek and Roman Empires, women were considered far infe-

rior to men and enjoyed no freedom. Even the religious laws that were to follow centuries later gave little relief to the women of that time: Genesis 3:16 states 'Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.'

Again up until the 6th century conditions declined and worsened.

'In pre-Islamic Arabia, and the rest of the world, their (women) condition was equal to that of slaves and chattels with no rights. Women could neither own nor inherit property. In domestic affairs, they had no rights over their children or themselves; in fact they could be sold or abandoned by their husbands at will. If they were abused by their husbands, they had no recourse to divorce. They had no real status in the society, not being respected as wife, mother or daughter. In fact, daughters were considered worthless and were often killed

at birth. Women were given little or no education, and had no say in religious matters, being regarded as limited in spirituality and intellect.' (*Pathway to Paradise*)

Whereas many of these conditions still remained in the West up until the 19th and 20th Century, with the advent of Islam the modern woman came into existence.

Islam is a religion of peace. The name Islam itself means peace and submission - submission to the Will of God. This religion is a complete code of life for the whole of mankind, for all times to come. A person who follows these laws and guidelines is a Muslim. A Muslim believes that God has created us for a purpose and given us His direction and guidance so that we can strive to worship Him, obey His commands and to serve humanity. The Holy Qur'an states:

I have not created the Jinn and the men but that they may worship Me.
(Ch.51: v.57)

A Muslim believes that God will judge his/her deeds and actions

in this life and he/she will be rewarded and dealt with accordingly in the life after death. God has provided the guidance for this life in the form of a Holy Book, the Qur'an, and in the teachings of Holy Prophet of God, Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

To understand the role of a Muslim woman in modern society one must understand the concept of equality between men and women in Islam. The Qur'an categorically declares the equality of men and women even as far back as their point of creation.

He has created you from a single being; then of the same kind made its mate.
(Ch.39: v.7)

The Qur'an states that women are equal to men in spiritual capabilities as well:

But whosoever does good works, whether male or female, and is a believer, shall enter Heaven, and shall not be wronged even as much as the little hollow in the back of a date-stone.
(Ch.4: v.125)

ISLAM HAS ESTABLISHED THE ECONOMIC POSITION OF A WOMAN AND GIVEN HER THE RIGHTS TO POSSESS HER OWN WEALTH AND PROPERTY – A RIGHT ONLY ACHIEVED BY WOMEN IN EUROPE IN 1882 SOME 13 CENTURIES LATER AS BEFORE THIS ANY PROPERTY SHE HAD WOULD AUTOMATICALLY BECOME HER HUSBAND’S.

In Islam a woman is equal in status, however, diversity still does exist, and these differences arise as a result of their design. If this diversity is not taken into account then there should not be discrimination: in sporting events, for example, a man should be allowed to compete against a woman, and a woman should have the right to compete against a man. For that matter a female boxer should be allowed to fight with a male boxer and a female football team. But we will not find any such examples. And it is not possible as nature has created men and woman with different designs, functions, capabilities and with different needs. Thus their tasks and roles in society would differ too. The Holy Qur’an states:

And follow the nature made by Allah – the nature in which He has created mankind. There is no altering the creation of Allah (Ch.30: v.31)

One of the examples of differing functions and capabilities is that a woman can bear children whereas a man cannot. It is only she who has the physiological and psychological design to do so. She also has the additional qualities of patience, tenderness and a unique bond established during the pregnancy that makes her more suitable for the upbringing of the children. Islam therefore encourages a woman to stay at home and take care of her family.

Men however are designed physically and emotionally stronger and therefore are better equipped to sustain the rigour of the outdoors and as such Islam assigns them the role of a guardian, protector and provider: responsibilities in line with their needs. As a husband, man is a guardian over his family and regarded as the head of the household. It is not a matter of man’s superiority or a woman’s inferiority; it is about natural capacity and proper functioning.

It is about the role assigned to men and women by nature.

Many Muslim women who follow these guidelines confirm that they enjoy a dignity, stability and fulfilment in their lives - factors which are often missing from societies of today.

Islam has established the economic position of a woman and given her the rights to possess her own wealth and property - a right only achieved by women in Europe in 1882 some 13 centuries later as before this any property she had would automatically become her husband's.

Islam provides economic security to the woman and has freed her from bearing any sole responsibility of being a breadwinner. Nevertheless, a Muslim woman can work if she so desires as long as it is within the perimeters of the teachings of Islam and as long as her functions and her duties towards her home and family are not affected. If she chooses to work, then her entire earnings are solely her's to do whatever she wishes. Should she wish to contribute to the running of the household then it

is seen as an act of kindness on her part. This right for a Muslim woman gives her absolute financial freedom, peace of mind and comfort, a right that many women of today's societies would cherish to have.

Again at the time of marriage Islam further protects the economic status of a woman by the system of the dowry. Here a husband is instructed to give a certain amount of money to his bride.

Marriage is perhaps the most important institution, as the family is the basic unit in a society. The Holy Prophet of Islam, Hadhrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: 'Conjugal life is our way, he who turns aside from our way is not one of us.' In the absence of marriage a woman can be misused as a mere instrument of indulgence. And thus Islam ensures that through marriage a bond of commitment is formed which provides a woman with rights that no other form of friendship or partnership can replace. The Holy Qur'an describes husband and wife as garments for each other, that is to say a means of security, dignity and ornament for each other.

THE CURRENT MISCONCEPTION SURROUNDING POLYGAMY THAT IS MERELY FOR LUST AND FUN IS INCORRECT. IN FACT, ISLAM PERMITS POLYGAMY ONLY UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS AND A MAN HAS TO UNDERTAKE FULL MORAL AND FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY WOMAN AND SUBSEQUENT CHILDREN HE MAY HAVE....THUS ISLAM PREVENTS THE UNOFFICIAL POLYGAMY THAT IS PRACTISED IN THE MODERN SOCIETIES OF TODAY.

The purpose of marriage in Islam is:

1. to enable a man and a woman to live together and experience love and happiness, fulfilment and contentment within Islamic law;
2. to produce children and provide a stable and righteous environment for their upbringing;
3. to provide a legal union which safeguards society from moral and social degradation.

Islam regards marriage as the means by which man's natural urges and needs, both physical and emotional are controlled and satisfied at the same time. Uncontrolled and uninhibited satisfaction of physical desire is simply not permitted in Islam. Adultery and fornication

are a grave sin. A Muslim man cannot go to any woman and merely satisfy his physical desires; he has to do so through a legal contract of marriage, which carries with it the additional responsibilities, duties and liabilities of family and children for the rest of his life'. The result of this restriction is a creation of a society whose morals and stability is safeguarded.' (*Pathway to Paradise*)

On the issue of divorce Islam gave a woman the right to seek a divorce. Nowhere else in the world had any woman enjoyed such independence at this time and it was not until as recent as the 19th century that women in France and the UK were able to gain this independence.

Islam permits plurality of wives but restricts the number to only four whereas in many other societies and religions the

number of wives is not specifically prohibited. The current mis-conception surrounding polygamy that is merely for lust and fun is incorrect. In fact, Islam permits polygamy only under certain conditions and restrictions and a man has to undertake full moral and financial responsibility for any woman and subsequent children he may have. The Holy Qur'an states:

And if you fear that you will not deal justly with them marry only one.

(Ch.4: V.4)

Thus Islam prevents the unofficial polygamy that is practised in the modern societies of today where a man may have any number of mistresses, one-night-stands, and affairs etc. In the absence of moral restraint, monogamy is abused.

The two world wars led to a moral degradation in Europe and America where the ratio of men and women at some places was reduced to 1 man to 3 women. With the system of polygamy, Islam, therefore, safeguards the moral and spiritual values of a woman and society as a whole. In Islam, acquiring knowledge is

compulsory for both men and women. The Prophet of Islam, Hadhrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: 'it is the duty of every Muslim man and every Muslim woman to acquire knowledge'.

Knowledge enables one to think with logic and reason. Through knowledge one gains understanding which enhances wisdom. In fact education is very important for a woman, as she is responsible for the upbringing of the future generation. While education was being promoted amongst the women of Islam, if a woman in the West displayed any type of knowledge, she was labelled as a witch and hundreds of thousands were burnt alive at the stakes.

In fact it was not until 1866 that any woman could sit on the Cambridge Exam Board and not until 1948 that she could attain a degree from Cambridge. Most of you would be surprised to learn that no woman was admitted in Oxford university before 1920. Until 1953, women teachers were paid less as compared to their men counterparts working in the same faculty for the same period of time. And until 1955, an

educated woman working in the civil services was paid less than her male counterparts and such battles are still continuing today.

Nothing generates more discussions than the piece of cloth that a Muslim woman wears over her head. There is a misconception that the veil is a sign of repression and restraint but to a Muslim woman it is a sign of protection, respect and dignity. The veil is not a sign of man's authority over a woman. It is meant only for her protection and to guard her against the harms of society. The Holy Qur'an states:

And say to the believing women that they restrain their eyes and guard their private parts and that they disclose not their natural and artificial beauty except that which is apparent thereof, and that they draw their head coverings over their bosoms...
(Ch.24: v.32)

Islam provides the precautionary measures so that a woman is not misused. Prevention is the better cure. The guidelines on adopting modest dress and coverings helps to reduce the attraction and

temptation of a man towards a woman and consequently she is protected from a host of problems that today's society is facing, for example, victims of rape and date rapes, early pregnancies, abortion, AIDS etc.

Also, the veil provides peace of mind for both partners. As gatherings are segregated, women do not have to worry as to who may be making advances at their husbands and vice versa. The aspects of segregation and the veil reduces the jealousy and inferiority complexes between women which otherwise arise naturally in the presence of men.

History and facts have led me to believe that Islam is a modern religion and it is the society which keeps on drifting away on a trial and error basis and then finally keeps reverting back to what Islam had advised centuries ago.

What seems modern to us in fact was given to us 1500 years ago. So contrary to modern beliefs a Muslim woman has dignity, fulfilment and contentment and is not stopped from pursuing a career or any form of healthy activity. She can play sports, run

marathons, run businesses, large co-operations, become a doctor, lawyer, engineer, diplomat, she can even stand for president. She has the right to choose a partner of her choice, who is bound to provide for her and her family needs, she can choose to divorce, she can marry again, she can come and go as she pleases and can partake in anything her heart desires - as long as she remains within the limits of the veil and abides by the teachings of Islam. She can just choose to relax at home and enjoy her economic freedom.

I am a British born Muslim. I am not suppressed. I am not restrained. I am not backwards. I have complete freedom and liberation through Islam and thus I conclude: that Islam is for the modern woman and she came into existence with the advent of Islam some 1500 years ago.



References:

1. The Holy Qur'an. Arabic Text and English Translation by the late Maulavi Sher Ali. 1989 Islam International Publications Ltd. UK.
2. *The Holy Bible*. New King James's Version. Thomas Nelson. USA
3. *Pathway to Paradise*. A guidebook to Islam. Lajna Immaillah U.S.A. Women's Auxiliary. Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam.
4. *Al-Fazal*. 18th January 2002: Address on Status of Women in Islam by Hadhrat Kahifatul Khalifatul Masih IV at Jalsa Salana on 26th July 1986.
5. *Review of Religions*. 'My Role and Rights as a Muslim Woman' by Mrs Aziza Rahman. September 1999, pp. 29-45.
6. *Woman in Islam*. Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan. Islam International Publications Ltd.

Are the Mountains Moving like the Clouds? – Amazing Revelations of the Holy Qur'an about Mountains

By Dr. Mian M. Abbas - Alabama, USA

Frequent references to the earth's mountains have been made in the Holy Qur'an with graphic descriptions about their nature and usefulness for human life. The purpose of this article is to present a brief discussion of some verses about the mountains in view of the recent scientific investigations about their origin and formation. Since this topic is intimately related to interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an about the creation of the universe and the natural phenomena in general, we begin with a discussion of the more general subject of the conformity of the Qur'anic verses with scientific knowledge.

The Qur'an and Science

The Holy Qur'an claims to be a book of guidance for the righteous as revealed to the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) more than 1400 years ago. It presents its teachings in a rational and philosophical manner in order to create a firm belief in

the existence of God and His divine attributes.

This is a perfect book; there is no doubt in it; it is a guidance for the righteous.
(Ch.2: v.3).

It recognises the superiority of those with knowledge over those who do not have knowledge (Ch.39: v.10), and encourages reflection on the vast natural phenomena around us as a proof of the existence of a Creator and Sustainer. It is estimated that there are about 750 verses of the Qur'an that exhort the readers to reflect on and study the natural phenomena around us with frequent examples referring to subjects dealing with many fields of knowledge including astronomy, cosmology, physics, and biology.

In the creation of the heaven and the earth and in the alteration of the night and the

day, there are indeed Signs for people of understanding. Those who standing, sitting or lying down on their sides bear Allah in mind, and reflect over the creation of the heavens and the earth, and say 'Our Lord! Thou has not created this without purpose.'
(Ch.3: v.191).

It is one of the basic premises of the teachings of the Qur'an that a deep study of the nature of the earth, the heavenly bodies, the origin of the universe, and the origin of life, leads to abundant evidence of the existence of God. The more one studies the creations and the natural phenomena in the universe, the more reasons and proofs one will find in support of the belief in the existence of God and His attributes. The fundamental assumption here is that there cannot be any conflict between our discoveries of the laws of nature, or science, and the revelation from God or the Qur'anic teachings and descriptions of the phenomena of nature.

While exhorting the readers to ponder over God's creation of the universe and all that exists therein, the Qur'an provides many graphic descriptions and insights into the creation of the earth, the heavenly bodies, and the diversity of natural

phenomena. Some of the verses may have literal interpretations, while others may be considered to be only metaphorical in nature with spiritual interpretations or dealing with prophesies about the future. More often, however, the Qur'anic verses have literal as well as spiritual interpretations. When dealing with topics that are either poorly understood or about which only speculative knowledge exists, literal interpretations that may be acceptable are made in accordance with the know-ledge of the times. With acquisition of new know-ledge, the interpretations are subsequently revised with deeper insight into the subject.

The interpretations of the Qur'anic verses, however, are not arbitrary. The general guidance and rules for inter-pretation have been laid down by the Qur'an⁽¹⁾ itself by identifying two classes of verses: those that are clear in meaning and decisive, and others that are not definitive and may have different interpretations. We have:

*He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book; in it there are verses that are decisive in meaning (muhkam) - they are the basis of the Book - and there are others that are allegorical (mutashabiha).
(Ch.3: v.8)*

The allegorical verses falling in the second category may involve spiritual analogies or may contain prophecies whose exact nature and time of fulfillment are yet to be determined. The general rule emphasized by the Qur'an for interpretation of such verses that may be indecisive or subject to different interpretations, is that their meaning must be corroborated by the decisive verses and must not be in contradiction to any other verse of the Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an is the ultimate commentator and interpreter of itself.

Qur'anic Verses on the Nature of Mountains

The purpose of this short article is to discuss some verses of the Qur'an referring to the nature of the mountains, in the light of recent scientific knowledge of their origin and evolution. Frequent references to the nature and usefulness of mountains have been made in the Qur'an, and we draw particular attention to the following verses in view of their graphic descriptions, and different interpretations that they have been subjected to:

He has set in the earth firm mountains lest it roll beneath you, and rivers and pathways that you may find your way.
(Ch.16: v.16)

Have we not made the earth a bed, and the mountains as pegs?
(Ch.78: v.8)

And when the mountains are made to move.
(Ch.81: v.4)

And the earth - We have spread it out, and made in it firm mountains and caused everything to grow in it in proper proportion. (Ch.15: v.20)

And He placed in the earth firm mountains, rising above its surface, and blessed it with abundance, and provided therein its foods in proper measure in four periods, alike for all seekers.
(Ch.41: v.11)

And you see the mountains as if they were firmly fixed, whereas they are moving like the clouds. This is the work of Allah who has perfected everything.
(Ch.27: v89)

The above Qur'anic verses may be interpreted in a spiritual sense, with the mountains referring to worldly powers or spiritually great personalities such as the prophets of God, and thus contain

prophecies that have been fulfilled or will be fulfilled in due time. Physical interpretations have also been given in view of the knowledge of the times and have been discussed in detail in some excellent commentaries of the Qur'an (2-4).

In this article, we focus only on the scope of the physical or literal interpretations in view of the current scientific knowledge. A careful study and reflection on the above quoted verses leads us to the following general Qur'anic concept of the mountains revealed some 1400 years ago:

1. The earth's surface on which we live is subject to motions underneath us.
2. The mountains play a role similar to those of pegs or stakes dug in the ground for resisting the motion of an object.
3. The formation and existence of mountains plays a role in the creation of pathways, rivers, drinking water, human food, and other needs for existence.
4. The mountains appear to us to be stationary and firmly fixed on the surface of the earth, whereas in fact they are

moving and their motion is similar to those of clouds.

The Qur'anic overview outlined above, in particular the verse (Ch.27:v.89), appears to be contrary to the commonly held views about the rigidity of the earth and the mountains, and has presented considerable difficulty to earlier commentators. However, during the last few decades an enormous amount of information has been obtained about the earth's formation, structure, geologic history and its interior processes. The earth is now viewed not as a solid and rigid body, but as a dynamic, ever changing and living planet. As a result a scientific field of study referred to as *plate tectonics* has evolved. The discoveries in this field are relevant to the subject of the Qur'anic verses under discussion, and we review the basic features of this theory that are now well accepted by the scientific community. *Although an attempt has been made to keep this review as simple and brief as possible, readers not interested in scientific details may wish to skip the next section and move on to the following section!*

Plate Tectonics

The unbelievable idea that the major landmass continents (such as

Asia, Europe, North America) are not rigidly fixed on the surface of the earth and have been moving around was expressed some three centuries ago. However, it was only in 1912 that the German scientist Alfred Wegener published his highly controversial view about the *continental drift* that some 300 million years ago all the major continents were connected in one big land mass, and have been drifting apart ever since. The only significant proofs of his ideas at the time were the jigsaw fitting of the geological structures of the adjoining continental landmasses and similarities of the plant and animal life. His theory, however, was generally considered to be absurd during his lifetime, and it was not until the 1960's that it started receiving serious attention. With subsequent investigations involving many scientific disciplines including satellite observations from space, the new field of study of *plate tectonics* has evolved. A summary of the basic features of the theory and our current knowledge of the earth's geological processes is outlined below. Detailed descriptions can be found in the references [5-8].

1. The interior of the earth consists of two inner and outer *cores* of hot molten iron and nickel at a temperature of

some 5500 degrees. This region is surrounded by a cooler and much thicker region of somewhat mellow rocky material of about 2000 miles thickness called the *mantle*. The outermost region of the earth is a thin region and is referred to as the *crust*. It floats on the mantle much like a raft floats on a pond of water. It is of two types; the *continental crust*, on which we all live, is lighter and is about 60-70 miles thick; and the *oceanic crust* consisting of a denser rocky material that lies under the oceans.

2. The *crust* is divided into at least 12 plates, such as Eurasian, African, and North American plates that float on the inner *mantle*. The plates are forced to move in a complex circulatory pattern, with some plates moving towards, some away and some sliding along other plates. Although the speed of the moving plates is too small to be observed by the human eye, being only of the order of a few centimeters a year, over a period of hundreds of millions of years it results in very large distances such as we find between the continents today.

3. When two continental plates moving towards one another collide, the material near the edges of the plates rises above the surface level and mountains are formed, while the oceanic plates moving towards or away from each other lead to the formation of ridges and trenches under the oceans. Thus, the mountains have been formed by the movement and collision of continental plates. The Indian plate having broken off the African plate some 200 million years ago and colliding with the Eurasian plate, for example, has formed the great Himalayan Mountains. The giant continental plates along with the great Himalayas are still moving and the mountains are still getting taller to this day.
4. The exact nature of the forces that lead to the motion of the giant tectonic plates is still not clearly understood, and is a subject of intense investigations. However, it is generally agreed that these forces arise from convection processes and circulation of the mantle material driven from the hot inner core of the earth. This process is similar to the circulation of hot water in a pot heated from below with a burner. Amazing as it may seem, the physical laws and the basic processes involved in the circulation of the mantle in the earth's interior are the same as in the circulation of air in the atmosphere rising upwards in the hot tropical regions and descending in the cooler high latitude regions. Such processes are also responsible for the formation and motion of clouds in the earth's atmosphere.
5. The interior of the earth has been and continues to be a dynamic and very much alive medium ever since its formation some 4.6 billion years ago, continuously changing. The motion of the tectonic plates leads to the formation and destruction of landmasses, mountains above the surface of the earth, and ridges and trenches under the oceans. Without the motion of tectonic plates, the landmasses with all its mountains would have disappeared a long time ago with the constantly occurring erosion processes. The whole earth would then be covered with the oceans. The land creatures and the human life as we see it today on the surface of the earth, with rivers, drinking water, food and

other needs for man's existence would not have been possible without the motions associated with the tectonic plates, and the existence of mountains.

Are the highly unusual ideas and processes summarized above merely a conjecture, based on some newly formulated 'theory' yet to be tested and validated? Do we have sufficient observational evidence to make such novel and revolutionary ideas believable? The brief answer is that there is now an over-whelming amount of evidence, obtained in widely diverse fields of study (such as geological structures, magnetite, fossils, plant and animal life, etc.) that the main features of the plate tectonic theory are now well established. This has happened during the last 50 years or so. The most persuasive evidence has come in the form of direct observation of the motion of the continents with ground-based and satellite-borne instruments. All such observations made with great precision, indicate that the continents are moving with respect to one another. The North American continent, for example, is observed to be moving away from Europe by about an inch every year. Although this motion appears to be very small, it leads to the entire width of the Atlantic Ocean

over a period of some 300 million years!

Qur'anic Revelations about Mountains

A comparison of our most recent knowledge about the nature of mountains based on the basic element of *plate tectonics* outlined here, with the description in the Qur'anic verses listed above, indicates a most astonishing validation of the Quranic verses revealed some 1400 years ago. Besides any metaphorical interpretations, we do know the Qur'anic descriptions of mountains have proved to be literally true, however incomprehensible they may have been in the past. From scientific investigations, today we do know that:

1. Although the mountains are stationary, they appear to be physically moving with respect to other objects on the surface of the earth, despite their enormous mass and rigidity.
2. The mountains do indeed play a role similar to that of pegs or stakes in the ground to resist the motion of movable objects, even though the pegs or the mountains are moving.
3. The physical processes leading to the motion of the mountains

are indeed strangely similar to the processes that lead to the formation and motion of clouds, namely the convection and circulation of air mass in the earth's atmosphere.

4. The formation of mountains has led to the existence of landmasses, pathways and modes of land borne transportation as well as the production of rivers and fresh water. Human and other animal life as we see it today on the surface of the earth would not have been possible without the processes that lead to the creation of mountains.

The revelations and validation of the hidden secrets behind the nature and formation of the mountains are absolutely amazing. A clear and graphic description of the nature of the mountains lay open to the readers of the Holy Qur'an for some 1400 years and yet it is only in recent times that the interpretations of the Qur'anic verses have become fully clear. From another point of view, the verses of the Holy Qur'an continue to be validated in every age with new knowledge and discoveries, continually providing powerful proofs and strengthening the belief of its Divine origin.

We conclude with two highly prophetic verses of the Qur'an touching on these two aspects:

We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation, and We will most surely safeguard it.
(Ch. 15: v. 10)

This verse contains in it one of the most wonderful prophecies of the Qur'an, the fulfillment of which is a continuing testimony to its Divine origin. It has always been held that the promise of safeguarding in this verse refers not merely to the preservation of the purity of the revealed text from subsequent changes and interpolations, but more importantly to the validity of their meanings and interpretations with the passage of time. That the physical text of the Qur'an is word by word identical to the Qur'an that was revealed and that existed at the times of the Holy Prophet of Islam has been well established by all scholarly studies and is beyond any dispute. It is the promise of preservation of the validity of the interpretations, and the intellectual content of the verses of the Qur'an that is being fulfilled in the present age. The accelerated pace of accumulation of new scientific knowledge, is providing testimony to its Divine origin in accordance with the claim:

Will they not then meditate upon the Qur'an? Had it been from any one other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much contradiction. (Ch.4: v.83)

References

1. The Qur'an: The chapter and the verse references are given with the convention of counting the first verse (In Qur'ans where the first verse is not numbered subtract one from the verse number given). The quoted English translation has been chosen by the author from a collection of translations, in particular: *The Holy Qur'an*, with English translation and Short commentary, Ed. Malik G. Farid, Islam International publications, London, 1994; *The Qur'an*, Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, Curson Press, 1970;
2. *Commentaries: The Holy Qur'an, with English Translation and Commentary*, Vol. 1-5, Alhaj. Mirza Bashir-ud-Mahmud Ahmad, Islam International Publ., London, 1988.
3. *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge, and Truth*, pp.307-311, Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Islam International Publ., London, 1998.
4. *The Bible, the Qur'an and*

- Science*, Maurice Bucaille, Dar Al Ma'arif, Egypt, 1977.
5. *This Dynamic Earth*, W. Jacquelyne Kious, and Robert I. Tilling, U.S. Geological Survey Publication, Wadhington, D.C., 1999.
 6. *The Dynamic Planet*, W. G. Ernst, Columbia University Press, New York, 1990.
 7. *Continents in Motion*, W. Sullivan, McGaw-Hill, New York, 1991.
 8. *Physical Geology*, N. K. Coch, and A.Ludman, Macmillan, New York, 1991.



Ch.16: v.16 is translated as: 'And he has placed in the earth firm mountains to sustain you and rivers and paths so that you keep to the right path'.

Likewise Ch.41: v.11 is translated as: 'He set therein firm mountains rising above its surface, and placed blessings therein and finely balanced its means os sustenance in four periods - alike for all who seek'.

Finally Ch.28: v.89 is translated as" 'And you see the mountains

imagining them to be stationary, while they are floating like the floating of the clouds. Such is the worth of Allah, Who has made everything firm and strong. Verily, He knows full well what you do'.

(*The Holy Qur'an*, translation by the late maulvi Sher Ali, published under the auspices of Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, 1997, Islam International Publications.

For an alternative view, the reader is also invited to *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth* by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad who answered a number of questions on this and related subjects some of which we have featured in the Review of Religions in the past
(Editor)

About the Author

Professor Dr. Mian Abbas Ph.D is a space scientist/astrophysicist, currently at the NASA marchall Space Flight Centre in Alabama. he has written a number of treatise and his research has been published in a number of scientific and technical journals.

Subscription

Review of Religions



The Holy Ka'aba MECCA, ARABIA

The First House of Worship, and
The Spiritual Heart of Islam

We hope you have enjoyed reading this edition of the magazine. *The Review of Religions* will continue to provide discussion on a wide range of subjects and welcomes any comments or suggestions from its readers.

To ensure that you regularly receive this monthly publication, please fill in your details below and we will put you on our mailing list.

The cost of one year's subscription is £15 Sterling or US \$30 for overseas readers (Please do not send cash). Payments should be made payable to the London Mosque and sent to the address below:

The Review of Religions
The London Mosque
16 Gressenhall Road
London SW18 5QL
United Kingdom

Please put me on the mailing list for the Review of Religions for 1 year. I enclose subscription payment of £15.00 or US \$30.00.

Name: _____

Address: _____
