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Photos at the launch of the Parliamentary report on Rabwah held at the House of Lords on 26th January 2007

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Fazal Ahmad – London

In recent years, the rapid economic progress of China and India have added pressure for resources, and heightened concerns over the impact of increased use of fossil fuels on climate change.

For many years, politicians in leading nations such as the US have often argued that fluctuations in climate are normal, and that there is no evidence that industrial growth has had an adverse effect.

However, the mood seems to be changing. In January, US President Bush declared that the US needs to reduce its energy consumption. An Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) consisting of more than 2,000 of the world's top scientists has concluded that world temperatures are likely to rise by 3°C by 2100 (possibly even as much as 6.4°C), and that sea-levels are likely to rise by between 28-43cm. It also warned

of increasingly intense storms. The report also highlights the growing certainty (greater than 90%) that this upward trend of disastrous weather has been directly contributed to through human activity and emissions into the atmosphere.

Concerned governments are now drawing conclusions that this will ultimately result in political instability and will impact prosperity. Already, global supplies of natural oil and gas are leading to wars. Given the large percentage of mankind that lives on or near the coastline, rising sea levels will drive population and increase competition for land.

Mankind has a responsibility to tread a 'middle path' in order to preserve the ecosystem. This is nothing new. When food stocks of types of fish were running low, quotas were placed on fishing to allow stocks to replenish naturally. Exactly the same is true of natural resources such as oil

Phenomenon and direction of trend	Likelihood that trend occurred since 1960	Likelihood of human contribution	Likelihood of trends for 21st Century
<i>Warmer and fewer cold days and nights over most land areas</i>	<i>Very likely</i>	<i>Likely</i>	<i>Virtually certain</i>
<i>warmer and more frequent hot days and nights over most land areas</i>	<i>Very likely</i>	<i>Likely (nights)</i>	<i>Virtually certain</i>
<i>Warm spells/ heat waves. Frequency increases over most land areas</i>	<i>Likely</i>	<i>More likely than not</i>	<i>Very likely</i>
<i>Heavy precipitation events. Frequency increases over most areas</i>	<i>Likely</i>	<i>More likely than not</i>	<i>Very likely</i>
<i>Areas affected by droughts increases</i>	<i>Likely in many regions since 1970s</i>	<i>More likely than not</i>	<i>Likely</i>
<i>Intense tropical cyclone activity increases</i>	<i>Likely in many regions since 1970</i>	<i>More likely than not</i>	<i>Likely</i>
<i>Increased incidence of extreme high sea levels (excludes tsunamis)</i>	<i>Likely</i>	<i>More likely than not</i>	<i>Likely</i>

Recent Climate Trends

IPCC WGI Fourth Assessment Report , 'Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis', February 2007

and gas where increasingly the focus is shifting to alternative energy sources.

The debate is now growing in intensity and voices in Europe are urging prompt action:

‘It is now more urgent than ever that the international community gets down to serious negotiations on a comprehensive new world-wide agreement to stop global warming.’ (*Stavros Dimas, EU Environment Commissioner*)

But if a concensus is ever reached, political action is likely to yield results the efforts of the individual cannot be under-estimated. Reducing waste, being more frugal with water and food, and not wasting energy will all have an effect if enough of us start taking action in our own homes and daily business. It is waste that is polluting the atmosphere, and waste that is filling huge holes in the ground, and we need to consider whether that is a fitting legacy for the generations to come.

However, amid the gloom, we should also bear in mind that the same God that created man, also created the Earth and all of the resources that we use, and the same God can create new avenues for man to sustain his existence, just as the Qur'an explains:

Allah is He Who created the heavens and the earth and caused water to come down from the clouds, and brought forth therewith fruits for your sustenance; and He has subjected to you the ships that

they may sail through the sea by His command, and the rivers too has He subjected to you.

And He has also subjected to you the sun and the moon, both performing their work constantly. And He has subjected to you the night as well as the day.

And He gave you all that you wanted of Him; and if you try to count the favours of Allah, you will not be able to number them. Verily, man is very unjust, very ungrateful.

(Ch.56: Vs.69-74)

The heaven and the earth have plenty of resources to sustain us, but we must first adopt the right course.

Let us pray that the damage that has already been done is not a climate change too far.

by Fazal Ahmad

ESSENCE OF ISLAM:

Part 17 – Matchlessness of the Holy Qur'an illustrated with Surah Fatihah

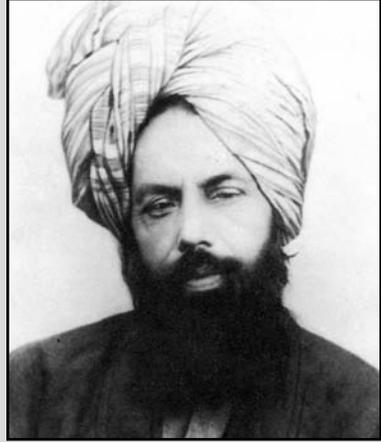
This series sets out, in the words of the Promised Messiah^(as), Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a summary of his exposition of four outstanding topics: ISLAM; ALLAH, THE EXALTED; THE HOLY PROPHET^(sa) and THE HOLY QUR'AN. The original compilation, in Urdu, from which these extracts have been translated into English, was collated with great care and diligence by Syed Daud Ahmad Sahib, Allah have mercy on him and reward him graciously for his great labour of love. Amin. The English rendering is by the late Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, may Allah be pleased with him, and is quoted from *The Essence of Islam*, Volume 1. All references throughout, unless otherwise specifically mentioned, are from the Holy Qur'an.

The descent of the Holy Word of God into the world and its being made known to God's creatures is the demand of the attribute of *Rahmaniyyat*. The attribute of *Rahmaniyyat* is manifested without being preceded by the action of any person and merely by the beneficence and bounty of God. God has created the sun and the moon and water and air, etc. for the welfare of His creatures and all this beneficence and bounty is by virtue of the attribute of *Rahmaniyyat*. No one can claim that these things have been created as a reward of any action

of his. In the same way, the word of God which has descended for the reform and guidance of mankind, has descended by virtue of this attribute. There is no animate who can claim that the Holy Word of God which comprehends His law has been revealed in consequence of any action or effort of his or as the reward of his virtue. This is the reason why despite the fact that there have been thousands who claim to be pure and virtuous and who have spent their lives in piety and worship, yet the Holy and Perfect Word of God which

brought into the world His commandments and informed men of His designs, was revealed only at such time when it was needed.

It is, however, necessary that the Holy Word of God should be revealed only to those who occupy a high place in holiness and purity of soul, inasmuch as holiness has no relationship with impurity. But it is not necessary that in every case of holiness and virtue there should be a revelation of the Word of God. The revelation of the true law and teaching of God Almighty depends upon true need. Whenever the need arose and it appeared that the Divine Word should be revealed for the reform of the age in that time, God Almighty, Who is All-Wise, revealed the word. At no other time is the perfect Word of God, which comprises Divine law, revealed, though there might be present millions of people who are righteous and pure and possess a high degree of holiness and virtue. It is true that God holds converse with some pure



The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as).

The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as). In 1891, he claimed, on the basis of Divine revelation, that he was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and by the scriptures of other faiths.

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

people but that also happens when according to Divine Wisdom true need arises for such converse. The difference between the two needs is that Divine law is revealed at the time

of such need when the people of the world, through misguidance and error, have turned away from the right path and a new law is needed to bring them back to it, which should remove their afflictions and lift their darkness totally by the light of its perfect and healing statements, and should provide with its forceful pronouncements the remedy which is needed by the corrupt condition of the world.

But the converse that is held with the *Auliya'* is not preceded by this great need. Very often, the purpose of such converse is to invest the soul of a saint with steadfastness at a time of distress, or to convey some piece of good news to him at a time when he is overcome by sorrow and grief. But the perfect and Holy Word of God Almighty that descends upon Prophets and Messengers is revealed, as we have just stated, when a true need for it arises and when mankind is in dire need of its revelation. Thus the true cause of the descent of the Word of God is its proper need. When the whole

night becomes dark and no light is left you realise that the appearance of the new moon is near. In the same way, when the darkness of misguidance overcomes the world, sane reason appreciates that the appearance of the spiritual moon is near. In the same way, when people are afflicted with a drought, the wise among them consider the descent of the rain of mercy very near.

In His physical law also God has appointed some seasons for rain during which God's creatures are truly in need of rain. From the rain that descends during those seasons, it cannot be concluded that at that time people do more good and at other times they are involved in vice. Those are seasons when cultivators are in need of rain and the descent of rain at that time becomes the cause of the growth of vegetation throughout the year. In the same way, the descent of the Word of God is not on account of the piety and righteousness of a particular person, that is to say, the cause of the descent of such word is not that a particular

person was very holy and virtuous, or was hungry and thirsty for the truth. As we have written so often, the true cause of the revelation of heavenly Books is their need, that is to say, that gloom and darkness spread over the world and demand a heavenly light which should dispel the darkness. This is indicated in the Divine Word in the verse:

Surely, We sent it down on the Night of Destiny
(Ch.97:V.2)

This Night, according to its common interpretation, is a Blessed Night, but some of the verses of the Holy Qur'an indicate that the condition of the darkness of the world is also a Night of Decree on account of its hidden qualities. In that condition of darkness, sincerity and steadfastness, and piety and worship, have great value in the estimation of God. It was because of that condition of darkness which at the time of the advent of the Holy Prophet^(saw) had arrived at its climax and demanded the descent of a Grand

Light, that observing this dark condition and having mercy on the creatures afflicted with darkness, there was an upsurge in the attribute of *Rahmaniyyat* and heavenly blessings addressed themselves to the earth. That dark condition became blessed for the world and the world thereby received a grand mercy so that the Perfect Man and the Chief of the Prophets, like whom there had been no one, nor ever will be, came for the guidance of the world and brought that bright Book for the world whose match no eye has beheld. It was a great manifestation of spiritual perfection of God that, at a time of gloom and darkness, He sent down a Grand Light which is named the *Furqan* and which distinguishes between truth and falsehood and which demonstrated the coming of truth and the disappearance of falsehood. It descended upon the earth when the earth had become spiritually dead and land and sea had been greatly corrupted. By its descent it accomplished that to which God Almighty has pointed in the verse:

Know that Allah quickens the earth after its death ...
(Ch.57:V.18)

That is to say: The earth had died and God revived it afresh.

It should be remembered that the descent of the Holy Qur'an which took place for the purpose of reviving the earth came about through the upsurge of the attribute of *Rahmaniyyat*. This is the attribute which sometimes manifests itself in a material way and causes the rain of mercy to descend upon dry land and thus makes provision for those who are afflicted with famine. The same attribute sometimes surges up spiritually and has mercy on the condition of those who are hungry and thirsty and near unto death on account of misguidance and error, and lack the nourishment of truth and righteousness which is the source of spiritual life. Thus the Gracious One, as He bestows nourishment upon the body at the time of need, so of His Perfect Mercy He provides spiritual nourishment also at the time of need.

It is true, however, that the Word of God descends only upon those of the elect with whom God is pleased, but it is not true that without any true need a heavenly Book is revealed to anyone with whom God is pleased, or that without any such need He necessarily and continuously holds converse with such a one. The Book of God is revealed only when its need arises. The true cause of Divine revelation is the *Rahmaniyyat* of God Almighty and not anyone's action. This is a great verity of which our opponents the Brahma Samajists and others are unaware.

Then it should be understood that for anyone to become the recipient of the Grace of Divine revelation, and to arrive at his goal through its blessings and lights and to obtain the fruits of his effort, comes about by the support of the attribute of *Rahmaniyyat*. This is why, after the attribute of *Rahmaniyyat*, Allah the Exalted cites the attribute of *Rahimiyyat*, so that it should become known that the

effects of Divine revelation which manifest themselves in the souls of people derive from the attribute of *Rahimiyyat*. To the degree to which a person turns to God, and sincerity and faith take possession of his heart, and he adopts obedience by putting forth appropriate effort, to that degree his heart is affected by Divine revelation and he derives benefit from its lights and the signs of those who are accepted by God are manifested in him.

The second verity which is contained in:

*In the name of Allah, the
Gracious, the Merciful
(Ch.1:V.1)*

is that this verse has been revealed for the commencement of the Holy Qur'an and the purpose of its recitation is to seek help from the Being Who comprehends in Himself all perfect attributes, one of which is that He is *Rahman* and out of His pure Benevolence He provides the means of cultivating good and blessing and guidance for a

seeker after truth; and another of Whose attributes is that He is *Rahim*, Who does not let go waste anyone's effort and blesses it with good results and bestows the fruit of his diligence upon him. These two attributes are such that without their help no design, whether secular or religious, can be carried to its goal.

Reflection would show that these two attributes are in operation all the time to bring about the fulfilment of all designs. The *Rahmaniyyat* of God began to manifest itself before man came into being, and it provides such resources for man as are beyond his power and which he cannot acquire through any design or planning. These resources are not bestowed as a consequence of any action but only out of Grace and Benevolence, as, for instance, the advent of Prophets, the revelation of Books, the provision of rain, the performance of their functions by the sun and the moon and air and clouds, and the appearance in the world of man himself

equipped with diverse types of faculties and capacities and his being granted a term of life in health, peace and leisure. All these are matters that manifest themselves in consequence of the attribute of *Rahmaniyyat*. In the same way, the *Rahimiyyat* of God is manifested when, possessing all faculties, man employs those God-given faculties to accomplish something and puts forth his strength and effort, then it is the way of the Divine that He does not let his effort go waste and blesses it with good results. It is His *Rahimiyyat* which quickens his dead effort.

The purpose of the verse is that when beginning the study of the Holy Qur'an, help and blessing should be sought from the *Rahmaniyyat* and *Rahimiyyat* of God Almighty Who comprehends all perfect attributes. The object of seeking blessings from *Rahmaniyyat* is that God, of His Bounty and Beneficence, might provide all those means needed before an effort is put forth in following Divine revelation.

For instance, the grant of life and leisure and appropriate opportunity, and the possession of faculties and strength, and the prevention of anything that might disturb comfort and peace or might prevent the heart from paying full attention, and to be bestowed the needed capacity; all these are achieved through the attribute of *Rahmaniyyat*. The purpose of seeking blessings through *Rahimiyyat* is that the Perfect Being should bless one's efforts with good results, and should safeguard one's hard work against being wasted and should bless it in consequence of the struggle and effort put forth. Thus when beginning the study of the Divine Word, and indeed at the beginning of every great effort, it is a high verity to seek blessings and help from the *Rahmaniyyat* and *Rahimiyyat* of God Almighty. In this way, man learns the reality of the Unity of God, and becoming certain of his own ignorance and unawareness, stupidity and error, and helplessness and contemptibility, his mind is fixed upon the Greatness and Glory of the Source of all

grace. Considering himself wholly poor and indigent and as nothing, man seeks the blessings of *Rahmaniyyat* and *Rahimiyyat* from the All-Powerful. These Divine attributes are in operation of themselves but the All-Wise has made it a law of nature from the beginning that man's prayer and seeking help have a great share in success. Divine grace addresses itself to resolving the difficulties of those who supplicate earnestly for success in their undertakings and whose supplications arrive at the full degree of sincerity. A person who considers his own weaknesses and observes his own defaults does not commence any enterprise freely and optimistically because his condition of servitude instructs him that he should seek the help of God Almighty Who is the Absolute Controller. This eagerness of true servitude is found in every heart which retains its natural simplicity and is aware of its weakness. A sincere person whose soul is not afflicted with any pride or arrogance and who is well aware of his weakness

and nothingness, and does not find himself competent to perform anything successfully, and finds no power or strength in himself when he begins an enterprise, naturally supplicates for heavenly strength. He beholds the Powerful Being of God in His Perfection and Glory all the time and he perceives that success in any endeavour depends upon *Rahmaniyyat* and *Rahimiyyat*. Then forthwith, before putting forth his defective and worthless effort, he seeks Divine help through the supplication:

*In the name of Allah, the
Gracious, the Merciful.*
(Ch.1:V.1)

Through such humility he becomes worthy to be bestowed power out of God's power, and strength out of His strength, and knowledge out of His knowledge, and to be successful in his designs. For proof of this no arguments of logic or philosophy are needed, for the soul of every person possesses the capacity to realise this and the personal

experiences of a true man of understanding constantly bear witness to its truth. There is nothing artificial about a creature seeking help from God, nor is it the result of idle thinking, nor is it without substantial result. This verity has been established by the eternal way of God Almighty, Who is truly the support of the world and with Whose support the ark of this universe constantly moves, that He lends His support to those who, deeming themselves low and insignificant, seek His support and begin their enterprise with His name. When they turn to God truly out of their humility and servitude, they are helped by His support. To seek the help of the name of that Fountainhead of Grace, Who is *Rahman* and *Rahim*, before commencing any substantial enterprise, is a way of respect and servitude and nothingness and indigence. This is the way which is the first step towards the acknowledgement of the Unity of God in one's actions. By adopting it, a person takes on the humility of children and is purified of the arrogance

which fills the hearts of the proud people of the world. By being convinced of his own weakness and the effectiveness of Divine help, he partakes of that understanding which is bestowed on the special men of God.

Without doubt, to the degree to which a person adopts this way, and makes it his duty to act upon it, and perceives his ruin in leaving it out, to that degree his faith in the Unity of God is established, and to that degree he is cleansed of arrogance and self-importance, and to that degree the darkness of artificiality is removed from his countenance, and the light of sincerity begins to shine on his face. This is the verity which gradually leads a person to the stage of his losing himself in God, till he realizes that he receives everything from God and nothing is his own. Whenever anyone adopts this way, the fragrance of the Unity of God begins to reach him at once, and his heart and brain are perfumed thereby, provided his sense of smell is not corrupted. In adopting this verity a seeker

after truth has to confess his own nothingness, and has to testify to God the Glorious being the Absolute Controller and the Fountainhead of grace. These two are the goal of the seekers after truth and are a necessary condition for the acquisition of the stage of being lost in God. To understand this necessary condition it is enough to know that even when there is widespread rain it falls only on the one who takes his stand at the place where rain is falling. Only those who seek find and those who ask are bestowed.

Those, who at the beginning of an enterprise, rely upon their skill, intelligence or strength, and do not put their trust in God Almighty, do not value properly the All-Powerful Who comprehends the whole world in His support. Their faith is like the dry branch which has no longer any relationship with its flourishing and green parent tree, and which has no part in its freshness and its flowers and its fruits. It has only an apparent connection with the tree which can be disrupted by

the slightest stir of the wind, or by being shaken by someone. Such is the faith of the dry philosophers who do not rely on the Supporter of the universe and do not realise their dependence during every moment upon Allah Who is the Fountainhead of all grace. These people are as far from the Unity of God as darkness is from light. They do not understand that to submit oneself to the great power of the All-Powerful, realising one's own nothingness, is the last stage of servitude and is the extreme point of the Unity of God, which makes the spring of total annihilation gush forth, and in which one is lost altogether to one's ego and its designs, and believes truly in the complete control of God. One should disregard the argument of the philosophers that there is no need to seek Divine help in beginning an enterprise, inasmuch as God has already invested our nature with appropriate powers and it would be an act of supererogation to supplicate Him again for those powers.

It is true that God Almighty has invested us with some powers for the doing of certain acts, but this does not mean that we are thereby freed from the governance of the Supporter of the universe and that He has separated Himself from us and has drawn away His support and has deprived us of His limitless grace. Whatever He has bestowed on us is limited, and what we demand from Him is without limit. Besides, we have not been given any power to accomplish that which is beyond our strength. Indeed reflection would show that we have not been given any power in its perfection. For instance, our physical powers depend upon our health, and our health depends on causes, some of which are heavenly and some are earthly, and all of which are beyond our power. In truth, the Supporter of the universe, by virtue of His being the Cause of causes, so comprehends our external conditions and our internal conditions and our first and our last, and our above and our below, and our right and our left,

and our hearts and our souls, and all the faculties of our souls, that it is a very fine problem, which is beyond the reach of human reason. It is not necessary to go further into the matter, for what we have said so far is enough to refute the objection of our opponents.

The only way of obtaining the grace of the Supporter of the universe is to supplicate with all one's faculties and force and strength. This is not a new way but has been inherent from the beginning in man's nature. A person who desires to tread along the path of servitude adopts this way, and the person who seeks the grace of God follows this path, and the person who seeks Divine mercy obeys these eternal laws. These laws are not new like the god of the Christians, but are firm laws which are eternal and are the practice of Allah which has been in operation all the time, the truth of which is apparent to every sincere seeker on account of the multiplicity of his experiences. Every blessing proceeds in this way that the

Being Who is the Absolute Controller and the Cause of all causes and is the Fountainhead of all grace, whose name in the idiom of the Qur'an is Allah, first displays His attribute of *Rahmaniyyat* and brings into existence whatever is needed, before one's own effort, out of His pure grace and beneficence without the intervention of any action on our part. When the attribute of *Rahmaniyyat* has done this work to perfection, and man having been bestowed the power exerts himself to the limit, then it is for God Almighty to display His attribute of *Rahimiyyat*, and to bring about a good result from the effort and diligence of His servant and safeguarding his industry from going waste, to bestow his object upon him. It is on account of this second attribute that it is said that he who seeks finds and he who asks is given, and he who knocks it is opened for him

It is a misunderstanding of a verity to think that sometimes this seeking of help proves of no avail and the *Rahmaniyyat* and

Rahimiyyat of God do not make themselves manifest on all occasions. Indeed God Almighty hears the supplications which are made in sincerity, and helps in an appropriate manner those who seek His help. Sometimes it happens that a person's prayer seeking help is not inspired by sincerity and humility, nor is his spiritual condition in order so that while his lips utter the prayer, his heart is heedless, or only makes a show. Sometimes it happens that God hears the prayer and bestows whatever He considers appropriate and best in His Perfect Wisdom, but an ignorant person does not recognise the hidden beneficence of God and on account of his ignorance and unawareness begins to complain, ignoring the subject matter of the verse:

... but it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you like a thing while it is bad for you. Allah knows all things, and you know not.
(Ch.2:V.217)

It may be that you dislike a thing and it is in reality better for you, and it may be that you like a thing and it is in fact harmful for you. Allah knows the true reality of things and you know it not.

So far it is clear that the verse:

*In the name of Allah, the
Gracious, the Merciful.*
(Ch.1:V.1)

comprehends the grand verity which comprises the excellent means of making progress in faith in the Unity of God and in servitude and sincerity, not matched in any other book. If anyone claims that it is so matched elsewhere, let him set forth this verity along with the other verities which we shall expound below.

Some short-sighted and ignorant opponents of Islam have raised an objection to the proper composition of *Bismillah*. One of them is the Rev. Mr. 'Imad-ud-Din, who has set forth the objection in his book *Hidayat-ul-Muslimin*. Another one is Bawa

Narayan Singh, a lawyer of Amritsar, who, deeming the objection of the reverend gentleman as having substance, has, out of the rancour of his heart, repeated it in his journal *Vidya Prakashak*. We now proceed to set forth the objection together with its answer so that every just person should realise to what degree of inner blindness bigotry has driven our opponents so that bright light appears darkness to them and excellent perfume smells vile in their nostrils. The objection by these critics raised against the profound and deeper meaning of the verse:

*In the name of Allah, the
Gracious, the Merciful.*
(Ch.1:V.1)

is that the sequence of *Rahman* and *Rahim* in this verse is not proper and that the proper sequence should have been *Rahim* and *Rahman*, inasmuch as *Rahman* signifies that mercy of the Divine which is general and comprehensive and *Rahim* signifies the mercy of the Divine

which is limited and special, and the rules of composition require that that which is limited should precede that which is general and unlimited and not vice versa.

This is the objection which these two gentlemen have raised with their eyes shut against a text the excellence of which has been admitted by all the learned of Arabia despite their opposition to Islam, among whom were included great poets. Great enemies of Islam were wonder-struck by the high grade of this text and many of them who were well-versed in judging the merits of a composition and were men of justice, finding the Qur'anic composition beyond the reach of human power and esteeming it a great miracle, believed in it. Their testimonies are referred to at various places in the Holy Qur'an ... This ignorant Christian does not appear to be aware that true eloquence does not demand that the small should always precede the large, and that the true rule is that a text should be the mirror of reality. Here also by making *Rahman*

take precedence over *Rahim*, the verse has become a mirror of reality. A detailed account of this natural sequence will be set forth in the course of the discussion of the other verses of the Surah Fatihah.

(*Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Ruhani Khazain, Vol. I, pp. 414-435, footnote 11*)

An independant report (reproduced with prior permission) that destroys the myth that being a majority in their headquarter, Ahmadis may be able to obtain police protection. A chilling reminder of the ostracisation of Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan, their continuing persecution and the absence of any protection by the authorities in Pakistan.

Rabwah: A PLACE FOR MARTYRS

Part one

Report of the UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group mission to Pakistan into internal flight for Ahmadis. Foreword by Lord Avebury. Mission members: Frances Allen, Michael Ellman, Jonathan Ensor.

By Dr Jonathan Ensor – UK

Foreword by Eric Avebury, Vice-Chair, Parliamentary Human Rights Group

Ever since its formation in 1976, the Parliamentary Human Rights Group (PHRG) has observed with concern the rising tide of intolerance and fanaticism in Pakistan, and the dire effects these trends have had on the rights and freedoms of the Ahmadiyya Muslim communities living in that country in

particular. In the early days of independence it was possible for talented Ahmadis like Sir Zafrullah Khan, Pakistan's first Foreign Minister, or Professor Abdus Salam, the Nobel Prize winning physicist, to rise to the top of their professions; today they face multiple threats to life and property; are effectively disfranchised and prevented from holding public gatherings¹; are denied access to higher education², and are barred from

1 Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, State of Human Rights 2005, January 2006, pp 205 et seq, www.hrcp-web.org/ar_home_05.cfm

2 'Muslim students must declare in writing that they believe in the unqualified finality of the prophethood of Muhammad, a measure designed to single out Ahmadis', US State Department, International Religious Freedom Report 2006, September 2006, www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/

entry to public employment except at the lowest levels.

In 1996, a report commissioned by the PHRG outlined the situation of the Ahmadis as it was then, describing murders, wrongful arrests and imprisonments, attacks on Ahmadi Mosques, and widespread religious discrimination³. The UN Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance said in a report of his visit to Pakistan that year that the laws were ‘likely to foster intolerance in society’, and the specifically anti-Ahmadi law was ‘particularly questionable and in some respects frankly unwarranted’.

In 2000, I attended the launch of President Musharraf’s human rights programme in Islamabad, and expressed satisfaction on hearing of his intention to mitigate the worst effects of the blasphemy law by providing that a First Information Report (FIR) on this offence could only be

lodged with the approval of a senior police officer. Unfortunately this signal of reform was greeted by an outburst of hostile invective from the small but vociferous anti-Ahmadi lobby, and the concession was withdrawn. There has been no let-up since then on the progressive tightening of the screws, or any mitigation of the flood of hate speech directed against the Ahmadis by the fanatical Khatme Nabuwwat (Finality of the Prophethood) organisation. It is easy enough, in a society where most people are poor and ignorant, to stir up violent prejudice against a religious minority holding views that are considered heretical by the majority, and to use the law of the land to make the ‘heretics’ into non-citizens, as we know from our own history. That path leads ultimately towards genocide.

In recent years, the PHRG has noted that an increasing number of Ahmadis, trying to escape the

³ Jeremy Hornsby, *Persecution of the Ahmadis in Pakistan*, Parliamentary Human Rights Group, 1996. Jeremy Hornsby, *Persecution of the Ahmadis in Pakistan*, Parliamentary Human Rights Group, 1996.

persecution in which they are trapped in Pakistan, have sought asylum in the UK, and although many have succeeded, our impression was that an increasing proportion were being refused. In a number of cases the reasoning was that, while the applicant might have had a well-founded fear of persecution within the meaning of the Refugee Convention if he returned to his locality of origin, he would be safe enough if he migrated internally to the city of Rabwah, founded by the Ahmadiyyah community and inhabited by a majority of Ahmadis. The anecdotal evidence we had from Rabwah was that life in Rabwah itself was severely restricted and that residents were subject to the same conditions, including occasional violence and intimidation, that occur elsewhere in Pakistan, and there was no real safety in numbers.

It was decided to invite a panel of experts to visit Rabwah, hold discussions there, and also meet

the authorities in Islamabad, to get as comprehensive a picture as possible of the conditions under which Ahmadis were living there. Dr Jonathan Ensor, the Senior Research Officer at the Immigration Advisory Service, Ms Frances Allen and Mr Michael Ellman, immigration practitioners, generously gave their time to this project, which involved not just the visit itself, but a considerable commitment of time to preliminary meetings and the drafting of their report. The PHRG thanks them warmly for their work, and hopes it will make a significant contribution to the determination of appeals that turn on the feasibility of internal flight.

The report itself draws no conclusions, allowing the facts to speak for themselves. However, the statistic that out of a total of 60 blasphemy FIRs recorded in 2005 against Ahmadis, 25 were in Rabwah alone, indicates that the misuse of the law is as severe in Rabwah

as in the rest of Pakistan. Evidence was seen by the mission that the Ministry of the Interior caused local police to issue proceedings against Ahmadis in Rabwah, as elsewhere, for action including distribution of literature, propagation of their faith, and collecting funds, and this led to the closure of a newspaper. The community also suffers more severely in Rabwah because of the presence of a Khatme Nabuwwat mosque and a madrassa, which regularly incites hatred against the Ahmadis, leading to systematic intimidation and violence. The mullah acknowledged that his followers chanted ‘Death to the Ahmadis!’, but pretended that the attack was on beliefs not persons.

Clearly, since Ahmadis are unable to vote – and are not even registered, since that would mean denying their faith – they play no part in the local government of Rabwah, but neither are they to be found among local police or officials. The evidence shows that hardly anything is spent on

public services in the town, though Ahmadis themselves club together to repair roads and drains. In Rabwah, as elsewhere, the schools were nationalised by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. They were denationalised in 1996, but in Rabwah, although the Ahmadis bought the schools back, they remain in government ownership, now derelict and dangerous.

This report makes clear the precariousness of life for Ahmadis in Rabwah, starved of opportunities for education and employment, menaced by the Khatme Nabuwwat and their rent-a-crowd mobs bussed in from miles around, prevented from buying land in the town they developed. They are deprived of the right to manifest their religion in worship, observance, practice and teaching, as laid down in the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and they are constantly under threat of prosecution under the infamous blasphemy laws. This place is not a safe haven for Ahmadis fleeing persecution

elsewhere in Pakistan; it is a ghetto, at the mercy of hostile sectarian forces whipped up by hate-filled mullahs and most of the Urdu media. The authors of this report expose the reality of a dead-end, to which even more victims should not be exiled.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the mission

The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam is a religious community founded in 1889 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) – Ed (1835-1908) in Qadian, India. He claimed that he was the ‘Promised Reformer’ and Messiah whose advent was awaited by the followers of different religions. Ahmad drew a large following, but other Muslims have strongly rejected his claims, insisting that Muhammad^(saw) – Ed was the last and final Prophet and there could be no other prophet or Messiah after him. Those most opposed to the Ahmadiyya Movement reject the notion that Ahmadis are Muslims and hold followers of Ahmad^(as) – Ed to be apostates.

Following the withdrawal of the British from India in 1947, the Ahmadi community left Qadian and fled, along with many thousands of other Muslims, to what would become West Pakistan. Partly through their excellent relationship with the new Government of Pakistan, a number of Ahmadi leaders arranged to purchase 1043 acres of barren land near Chiniot, in Punjab. There the Ahmadi community members founded and developed Rabwah, which is today the administrative centre and headquarters of the Ahmadi community in Pakistan. Rabwah is also seen as the alternative to their spiritual centre in Qadian and has a number of sites that are considered holy by the Ahmadi community. However, following anti-Ahmadi riots in 1953 and 1974, relations with the government deteriorated considerably, prompting the government to support the establishment of a non-Ahmadi Muslim community in the town. Today Rabwah is also home to a non-Ahmadi Mosque, Madrassa and a so-called ‘Muslim Colony’

of non-Ahmadi Muslim residents on the outskirts of the town. Khatme Nabuwat (Committee to Secure the Finality of the Prophethood), a group with a following throughout Pakistan, are specifically opposed to the Ahmadi belief in the nineteenth century Messiah and maintain a group in Rabwah centred on a mosque at the edge of the town.

Ahmadis consider themselves to be Muslims and believe that they observe Islamic practices. However, in 1974 Prime Minister Bhutto enacted an amendment to the constitution declaring Ahmadis to be non-Muslims because they do not accept Muhammad^{((saw))} – Ed as the last prophet of Islam. In the decades following 1974 the position of Ahmadis in Pakistani law has become increasingly precarious. In the 1980s, measures brought in by Zia-ul-Haq to Islamicise Pakistan's civil and criminal law affected all religious minorities but particularly Ahmadis. Ordinance XX proclaimed in 1984 amended

the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) by adding sections 298b and 298c, both Ahmadi specific provisions further restricting their freedom of religion and expression. Section 298c, for example, has been referred to as the 'anti-Ahmadi laws' and prohibits Ahmadis from calling themselves Muslim, posing as Muslims, calling their faith Islam, preaching or propagating their faith and from insulting the religious feelings of Muslims. The so called 'Blasphemy Laws' in sections 295, 296, 297 and 298 of the PPC have been repeatedly condemned by international observers for severely constricting freedoms of expression, religion and opinion and for facilitating the detention of persons on vaguely defined charges of committing blasphemy or other religious offences. Clauses added to the PPC in 1986 (sections 295b and 295c) made defiling the holy Qu'ran or the name of the Holy Prophet^{((saw))} – Ed subject to heavy penalties including the death penalty, life imprisonment

and fines. In 1991, the Sharif government made the death penalty the mandatory punishment for blasphemy against the name of the Prophet⁴.

In 1999 the Government of Punjab officially changed the name of Rabwah (which means 'higher level') to Chenab Nagar (reflecting the town's location near to the Chenab River). This move was completed against the wishes of the Ahmadi community, who continue to refer to the town as Rabwah. Rabwah is the preferred name throughout this report, although some respondents are recorded referring to the new name. Similarly, Ahmadis are referred to by some respondents as Qadianis, a term that refers back to the community's original spiritual home in India, and is considered highly pejorative by Ahmadis. The term 'Ahmadi' is therefore used in this report. Official government figures place the number of Ahmadis in Pakistan

at around 70,000. However, Ahmadis have boycotted or classified themselves as 'Muslim' in the census since 1974, the alternative being to classify themselves as 'non-Muslim'. The government figures are therefore significantly inaccurate. The mission were given figures for the current number of Ahmadis in Pakistan of between 2 and 5 million.

The situation faced by some members of the Ahmadi community in Pakistan has prompted them to flee the country and seek asylum in the UK. In the course of deciding on the merits of these claims it has been repeatedly suggested that Ahmadis have an 'internal flight alternative' available to them: in short, that by moving to Rabwah, a persecuted Ahmadi would be able to gain security without leaving Pakistan. This assessment is based on the assumption that as Ahmadis form the

⁴ For more background detail, see, amongst other sources: US Department of State, International Religious Freedom Report 2006, September 2006; and International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH): International Fact-Finding Mission Report, "in Male Fide" Freedom of expression, of association and of assembly in Pakistan, 17 January 2005.

majority community in Rabwah, the town is able to offer protection to Ahmadis suffering persecution elsewhere in Pakistan. The Parliamentary Human Rights Group identified this assumption as key to many asylum claims and sought to test its veracity. A mission to Pakistan, focussing on Rabwah and recorded in this report, was the result.

1.2 Report scope and structure

The mission focussed exclusively on issues relating to an internal flight alternative to Rabwah. This report, therefore, is only intended to provide evidence on this issue. However, in the course of the mission's work it quickly became apparent that it is impossible to divorce the issues relating to Rabwah and internal flight from the broader social and political context within which Ahmadis survive in Pakistan. As a result some sections of this report consider the current situation faced by Ahmadis throughout Pakistan. Whilst the report is accurate in terms of having

recorded the responses of a wide range of sources, it cannot and should not be considered or used as an exhaustive study of Ahmadis in Pakistan. Moreover, whilst every effort was made to consult as widely as possible in Pakistan, the mission members acknowledge and emphasise that no mission can be expected to provide a complete representation of its subject.

The remainder of this report is organised as follows. This Introduction concludes with a statement regarding the methodology employed by the mission and a list of those sources the mission consulted, or attempted to consult, whilst in Pakistan. The main body of the report commences with a review of the position of Ahmadis in Pakistan, included, as noted above, as a necessary context without which the subsequent sections cannot be understood. This section addresses how discrimination against Ahmadis has reached a point where violence can be advocated against Ahmadis without government or police censure.

The particular role played by the anti-Ahmadi organisation, Khatme Nabuwat, is introduced, as are the blasphemy laws and the use of First Information Reports (FIRs) to effect an arrest. Section 3 presents the evidence collected by the mission relating to the potential risk factors faced by Ahmadis in Rabwah. These consist of: the blasphemy laws; practising or expressing the Ahmadi faith; preaching by Ahmadis; threats and physical attacks; and attacks on property. Finally, section 4 considers the protection available for Ahmadis in Rabwah. Three types of protection are identified: community protection, meaning the security offered to Ahmadis as a result of living in an Ahmadi-majority town; state protection, including the effectiveness of the police and judiciary in protecting Ahmadis in Rabwah; and the social and economic conditions that define everyday life for residents of Rabwah.

No conclusions have been drawn in this report as it is the intention of the mission to provide an

accurate and accessible reproduction of the evidence that it received rather than to make an assessment as to the viability of internal flight. The latter is properly the role of asylum decision makers.

1.3 Methodology

The mission arrived in Pakistan on 8 October 2006 and remained in the country for eight days. The time was split between Faisalabad, where three days were spent travelling to meet sources in Rabwah and Jhang; Lahore (two days); and Islamabad (two days). The first day was spent travelling to Faisalabad from Islamabad. Most meetings had been set up in advance of travelling to the specification of the mission. Meetings with sources took the form of semi-structured interviews. The mission travelled with a set of questions under the headings: religious activities of Ahmadis; FIRs and blasphemy; protection in Rabwah; relocation to Rabwah; and life in Rabwah. These questions were used as the framework for discussions with each of the sources. All responses

were recorded in written form by all members of the mission and the report was prepared from these responses in the period mid-October to mid-December 2006. Translation was provided where necessary by Salim Malik, of the Ahmadi community in the UK, and all sources were offered the option to have their responses recorded anonymously.

The mission members were:

- Frances Allen (Barrister, 12 Old Square),
- Michael Ellman (Solicitor, Chair of Solicitors International Human Rights Group and Officer of the International Board of the International Federation for Human Rights – FIDH) and
- Dr Jonathan Ensor (Senior Research Officer, Immigration Advisory Service).

1.4 Sources

The following individuals and groups were interviewed by the

mission. Additional materials were occasionally supplied by them and are referred to in the text. Copies of all these materials can be found in Appendix B. Direct quotes from sources have been identified in the body of the report by the use of quotation marks.

Senior Government Advisor.

The mission interviewed a senior government advisor who is an acknowledged expert in Islamic religious issues. In order to speak freely the source requested that his name and position be withheld. The name and status of the source is known to the authors of this report.

Khatme Nabuwwat (Islamabad Chapter).

The mission met with Maulana Abdul Rauf, President of Khatme Nabuwwat Islamabad Chapter, Muhammed Tyeb, Office Manager for Khatme Nabuwwat Islamabad, Mufti Abdul Rashid, Bari Abdul Rashid and Ibrahim Rashid, both Members of Khatme Nabuwwat Islamabad.

Mullah Allah yar Arshad, President of Khatme Nabuwwat in Rabwah (Mullah Arshad).

Mullah Arshad has lived in Rabwah for 30 years, and has been a member of Khatme Nabuwwat since the founding of the organisation. When the mission met with Mullah Arshad the interview was interrupted by Mr Rabnawaz, who provided lengthy interjections. He is a lawyer practising in nearby Chiniot, and is president of the local forum of Khatme Nabuwwat in Chiniot.

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

The mission was met by Ms Asma Jahangir (Chairperson), Mr I A Rehman (Joint Director), Kamila Hyat (Joint Director), Mr Mehboob Ahmed Khan (Legal Officer) and Air-Marshall (retd) Zafar Chaudhry (former council member). The HRCP describe itself as ‘an independent, non governmental organisation registered under the law.’ Its main office is in Lahore. It started

functioning in 1987. The highest organ of HRCP is the general body comprising all members. The general body meets at least once every year. The executive authority of the organisation vests in the Council that is elected every three years. The Council elects the organisation’s office-bearers – Chairperson, not more than five Vice-Chairpersons, a Secretary General and a Treasurer. No office holder in government or a political party (at the national or provincial level) can be an office-bearer of HRCP. The Council meets at least twice every year. Besides monitoring human rights violations and seeking redress through public campaigns, lobbying and intervention in courts, HRCP organises seminars, workshops and fact-finding missions.’ (*www.HRCP-web.org*)

Faiz ur Rehman, President, Amnesty International Pakistan.

Mr Rehman explained that he is also a member of the United Citizens Forum, a relatively new

organisation of ‘prominent persons’ that aims to observe and assess the factors behind religious problems in Pakistan, and to seek solutions to those problems nationally and internationally. It is through his work with Amnesty International, which has a human rights violation focus, and his work with the United Citizens Forum, which has a religious focus, that Mr Rehman has knowledge and experience of the situation facing Ahmadis in Pakistan. He explained that his views were based on a combination of his familiarity with the situation in Pakistan, his reading of back-ground literature and reports, and his first-hand experience as the leader of two fact finding missions investigating attacks on Ahmadis, most recently at Jhando Sahi in August 2006 (following attacks that forced the whole Ahmadi community to flee).

British High Commission Islamabad (BHC).

The mission met with Peter

Wilson, Political Counsellor, and Matthew Forman, Second Secretary (Political), at the British High Commission in Islamabad. At one point in the meeting, the BHC noted that in their view the comments of the HRCF usually reflect a tendency to ‘see the glass totally empty’.

Amjad J Salimi, District Police Officer, Jhang (DPO Salimi).

DPO Salimi only took over at Jhang three weeks before the mission's visit; he had previously been stationed in Baluchistan. The DPO at Jhang is responsible for the police force stationed at Rabwah.

Saeed Tatla, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Rabwah (DSP Tatla).

DSP Tatla had been in his role in Rabwah four months, since June 2006. He informed the mission that he had little knowledge of events in Rabwah before his arrival. DSP Tatla is one of DPO Salimi's subordinates.

Mr. Mohamed Ibrahim, Secretary to the Mayor of

Rabwah (Mr Ibrahim).

Senior members of the Ahmadi Community in Rabwah (Ahmadi Community Representatives).

The mission met with several senior members of the Ahmadi Community in Rabwah. Present at the meeting were: Mirza Khursheed Ahmed (Chief Executive of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan), Ch Hameedullah (Director General of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan), Mujeeb-ur-Rehman (Advocate Supreme Court), Mobashir Latif Ahmad (Advocate Supreme Court), Pervaiz Ahmad Cheema (Advocate High Court). These five community members provided the bulk of the responses. However, the following were also present at the meeting and provided additional comments: Mansoor Ahmad Khan (Director, Foreign Missions Office), Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (Director, Human Resources), Saleemudin (Director, Public Affairs), Qasim Shah (Former Director, Public Affairs), Mubarak Ahmad Tahir (Legal

Advisor to the Community), Mirza Adil Ahmad (Assistant Legal Advisor), Ahmad Khalid (Human Rights Desk), Aziz Ahmad Omer (Assistant).

The mission were also offered an appointment to see a member of the Ahmadi community in **Faisalabad jail**, where he reportedly resides having received a life sentence under 295c of the penal code. Unfortunately time constraints prevented the mission from following up this interview.

Pakistan Ministry of the Interior rebuffed repeated requests for an interview. Requests were made in the weeks before travelling to Pakistan and whilst the mission were travelling.

Repeated attempts were made to secure an interview with the **Mayor of Rabwah** and three appointments were made to meet with him in his office in the Rabwah municipal building. However, the Mayor failed to attend on each occasion.

2. The Position of Ahmadis in Pakistan

This section has been included because a number of sources emphasised that an understanding of the social and political context in which Ahmadis live in Pakistan is required before the situation in Rabwah can be understood. The remainder of this report should therefore be considered against the background presented in this section. Evidence presented to the mission regarding the role of Khatme Nabuwwat, together with the function of the blasphemy laws and First Information Reports (FIRs) is also presented in this section.

2.1 Social and political environment

The mission heard several accounts of how popular sentiment in Pakistan has become increasingly hostile to Ahmadis. The Senior Government Advisor explained how the population of Pakistan has become sensitised to Ahmadis since a spate of anti-Ahmadi violence in 1953. He

explained how Islamic groups politicised anti-Ahmadi feeling, characterising the Ahmadi view of jihad (as a call for dialogue rather than taking up arms) as evidence that the Ahmadis are a group created by the colonial British to allow Islam to be conquered, and painting the Ahmadi recognition of a more recent Prophet than Muhammad^{((saw))} – Ed) as a tactic of the British to marginalise or divide Muslims and thus sustain the British empire. In this way the religious and political have gradually been conflated, climaxing in the 1974 (political) declaration of Ahmadis as non-Muslims following a further outbreak of anti-Ahmadi violence. For the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) severe discrimination against the Ahmadis started with the 1974 declaration and the situation has been deteriorating ever since.

The HRCP note that there is a class or economic element motivating this treatment of

Ahmadis, pointing out that the Hindu community, who belong to a low economic class, receives relatively little popular attention and low levels of discrimination. The Ahmadis, however, tend to be an educated and successful community whose members have historically risen to important positions in government and civil society. Today, Ahmadis are prevented from accessing senior employment in state defence or civil institutions. Faiz ur Rehman (President of Amnesty International Pakistan) described the situation in similar terms: prior to 1974 there had been a large number of Ahmadis in senior positions in the Pakistan administration. This is now no longer the case: there are no Ahmadi policy makers, judges, or educationalists.

The Senior Government Advisor explained that in the large areas of Pakistan where literacy is low, people's understanding of unfamiliar issues (such as Ahmadis) is determined by what they hear in the Mosque. Faiz ur Rehman

made a similar point, noting that in small towns literacy is often poor, providing the Mullahs with an uncritical audience. In such areas, the Mullah has the power to tell the population how to behave – characterised as being ‘for the good of their eternal souls’ – and the people are likely to comply. The Senior Government Advisor also explained that the fundamentalists are effective at using the media and have always been adept at capturing the public sphere. The result is that large sections of the population have been made fearful of Islamophobia and of becoming a minority similar to the Muslim community in India. The HRCP and British High Commission (BHC) also noted the role played by the media. The HRCP described the vernacular press as having become virulently anti-Ahmadi. State television contains broadcasts of anti-Ahmadi rhetoric, including phrases such as ‘Ahmadis deserve to die.’ Even in the traditionally liberal English

language press, religious freedom is becoming harder to defend as journalists increasingly fear attack if they defend Ahmadis. The BHC stated that public opinion on Ahmadis, encouraged by the vernacular press, is conservative. Whilst Christian rights may be upheld in the press, Ahmadi rights are not. The effect is that most people have accepted the proposition that Ahmadis are non-Muslim and this is as far as they take the issue. However, others use the discrimination as an opportunity for personal or political gain.

The HRCP stated that the situation faced by Ahmadis today is very poor, and becoming worse as each year passes. In a country where sectarianism is on the increase, the Ahmadis were described by HRCP as being in the worst case scenario: the official policy on religion leaves the group extremely vulnerable. The threat to Ahmadis varies from place to place: in some villages Ahmadis are able to live safely, whilst in others they have

been driven out. The reports of violence fluctuate each year but the overall trend of violence against Ahmadis is worsening. Asma Jahangir, Chairperson of the HRCP and UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedom or Belief, summarised the situation: ‘even if a fly is killed it is the Ahmadis fault and the Jews are behind it.’ The atmosphere of intolerance towards Ahmadis – in which the perpetrators of violence against them are painted as the injured parties – is increasing, and is being indirectly nurtured by the government who do not defend Ahmadis. Three years ago a member of the judiciary or government would have spoken out against violence or stepped in to defend Ahmadis against attacks in the press, but this is no longer the case. The HRCP highlighted two prominent examples: first, the Prime Minister has publicly declared that he is not an Ahmadi after his opponents used this accusation against him; and second, during a debate aired on state television

in which a government minister participated, it was stated that Ahmadis ‘deserve to be killed’. The minister did not challenge the comment and no prosecution has been brought. The HRCP expressed the view that through not challenging such statements the state is effectively providing extremists with a licence to promote intolerance and abuse.

The BHC characterised the current political climate as one in which President Musharraf’s declared approach of ‘enlightened moderation’ is in the balance, with a battle being fought between modernisers and extremists. The current attempts to reform the Hudood ordinances are an example of this. The reforms have turned into a contest between Musharraf’s attempts to reverse President Zia’s legacy, and the conservative leadership who believe they can rely on the Mullahs to bring the population to the street to prevent reform. It is notable that Musharraf’s own party convened a meeting to under-

mine the Hudood reforms once the President had left Pakistan. It is in this context that religious reforms must be seen: the BHC believes that Musharraf and the Prime Minister have done much to promote religious tolerance. However, on the ground little has changed. The use of religion to gain advantage continues and Musharraf’s attempt to prevent abuse of the blasphemy laws has had little impact in reality (see ‘Blasphemy Laws and FIRs’, below). The BHC noted that even within this context the Ahmadi issue is different as public opinion has become set against the Ahmadis. The sensitivity of Ahmadi identity is such that Ahmadis face social isolation. In Mr Rehman’s view the Ahmadis are the most repressed community in Pakistan. Whilst the Christian community face problems, they have profile and support in Pakistan. No one is exerting pressure on behalf of the Ahmadis.

The BHC also noted that there is under-reporting of Ahmadi per-

secution, making it difficult to make an accurate assessment of the frequency of attacks against Ahmadis; however, the BHC consider the problems faced by Ahmadis to be a serious issue. The Pakistan government has done little to alleviate the problems faaced by Ahmadis: it would be ‘political suicide’ to deal with the Ahmadi problem directly and politicians will not use the example of the Ahmadis to make the case for religious tolerance. The Senior Government Advisor draws a similar conclusion: it is now beyond the power of government to reverse the situation for Ahmadis. Over time the religious political parties have gained in strength, sensitising the population to the status of Ahmadis to the point where ‘the common man can be incited and brought to the street against Ahmadis. The Senior Government Advisor believes that changes in the law will not be sufficient to change the view of the population: there must be a change in the views held in society first. However, whilst

extremism is limited to certain groups, no one dares to speak freely about religious issues. Even the most open and secular political parties are not prepared to challenge the public perception of Ahmadis for fear of losing credibility and standing in the eyes of the public. The result is that there is no party or institution prepared to lead the debate on Ahmadis in Pakistan and, therefore, a change in public attitude is not anticipated in the near future.

2.2 The role of Khatme Nabuwwat (Committee to Secure the Finality of Prophethood)

The mission had been made aware of the significance of Khatme Nabuwwat prior to travelling to Pakistan through reports such as the UK Home Office’s Pakistan Country of Origin Information Report, in which it is reported that Khatme Nabuwwat ‘have called for the banning of the Ahmadi movement and the killing of Ahmadis.’⁵ In Pakistan, the mission were informed by the

Ahmadi community representatives that the main perpetrators of attacks on Ahmadis and on property in Rabwah are members or supporters of Khatme Nabuwwat. Faiz ur Rehman, President of Amnesty International Pakistan, noted that Khatme Nabuwwat are present in Rabwah and are repeatedly in the news for, for example, inciting violence, attacking the library or picking up people from Rabwah and passing them to the police. Mr Rehman explained that through his work with Amnesty International he knew that Khatme Nabuwwat in particular are known for making telephone threats directly to judges in Ahmadi cases. The British High Commission noted that Khatme Nabuwwat are linked to many mainstream political parties and opposition leaders. The Ahmadi Community Representatives confirmed this through an example: on 5 September 2006 Hafiz Tahir Mahmud Ashrafi, Advisor to the Chief Minister of

the Punjab for the Promotion of Religious Harmony, was a special guest at the Khatme Nabuwwat conference held at Sargodha.

When asked to explain the role and purpose of their organisation, members of the Islamabad Chapter of Khatme Nabuwwat informed the mission that it is Khatme Nabuwwat's belief that no Prophet can come after Muhammad^(saws) – Ed) as he is the final Prophet. Anyone who claims otherwise is an infidel and their claim is false, baseless and a crime. Khatme Nabuwwat's mission is therefore to spread understanding of the finality of the Prophet through preaching and books. The source insisted that they have mutual respect for all, including Ahmadis, as humans. However, Ahmadis should not assert themselves to be Muslim because they do not believe in the laws of the Prophet. Mullah Arshad, of the Rabwah Chapter of Khatme

5. For more background detail, see, amongst other sources: US Department of State, International Religious Freedom Report 2006, September 2006; and International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH): International Fact-Finding Mission Report, "in Male Fide" Freedom of expression, of association and of assembly in Pakistan, 17 January 2005.

Nabuwwat, told the mission that the purpose of Khatme Nabuwwat is to act against those who do not accept the finality of the prophet, to contradict them and to invite them to rejoin the faith. Mullah Arshad confirmed that this role means that the focus of Khatme Nabuwwat is on Ahmadis in particular. According to Khatme Nabuwwat (Islamabad Chapter) the movement against Ahmadis started when members of the Muslim community were attacked by Ahmadis at Rabwah railway station in 1974: the source told the mission that ‘Ahmadis were terrorists, and they are terrorists today.’

Mr Rabnawaz, whom the mission met with at the Khatme Nabuwwat mosque in Rabwah, was more expansive in his explanation of Khatme Nabuwwat’s views. Repeating the accusations referred to in the historical account of anti-Ahmadi agitation communicated by the Senior Government Advisor (above), Mr Rabnawaz

stated that the Ahmadi community was essentially a creation of the colonial era British Government. He claimed that the British had recognised Ahmad as a messiah out of political necessity and then had made use of the Ahmadi sect to divide Muslims. According to Mr Rabnawaz the legacy of British sponsorship is Ahmadi power in Pakistan today. This can be seen from the fact that although there are only around 125,000 Ahmadis in Pakistan, of whom about 25,000 are in Rabwah, ‘Ahmadis hold 20-30% of the power in Pakistan’, with Ahmadi bureaucrats in the administration providing support to other Ahmadis.

2.3 Blasphemy Laws and First Information Reports (FIRs)

Zia ul-Haq's 1984 Ordinance XX introduced explicit references to Ahmadis in sections 298b and 298c of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) (see Appendix C: Copy of Ordinance No. XX of 1984 and 1986 Amendment to the section 295c of the Pakistan Penal

Code). Section 298b significantly restricts Ahmadi freedom of religion and expression requiring ‘a term which may extend to three years’ and a fine for any Ahmadi:

who by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation;

- (a) refers to, or addresses, any person, other than a Caliph or companion of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as ‘Ameerul Mumineen’, ‘Khalifa-tul-Mumineen’, ‘Khalifa-tul-Muslimeen’, ‘Sahaabi’ or ‘Razi Allah Anho’
- (b) refers to, or addresses, any person, other than a wife of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as ‘Ummul-Mumineen’
- (c) refers to, or addresses, any person, other than a member of the family

(Ahle-bait) of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as ‘Ahle-bait’; or

- (d) refers to, or names, or calls, his place of worship as ‘Masjid’

The same punishment is prescribed for any Ahmadi who ‘refers to the mode or form of call to prayers followed by his faith as ‘Azan’ or recites Azan as used by the Muslims’. 298c specifically defines Ahmadi as non-Muslims, imposing three years imprisonment and a fine on any Ahmadi who

directly or indirectly, poses himself as Muslim, or calls, or refers to, his faith as Islam, or preaches or propagates his faith, or invites others to accept his faith, by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representations, or in any manner whatsoever outrages the religious feelings of Muslims

Clauses added to the PPC in 1986 (sections 295b and 295c) make defiling the Holy Qu'ran or the name of the Holy Prophet subject to heavy penalties including the death penalty, life imprisonment and fines. 295c is broadly defined, including derogatory remarks in respect of the Holy Prophet by 'imputation, innuendo, or insinuation' (see Appendix C). In 1991, the Sharif government made the death penalty the mandatory punishment for blasphemy against the name of the Prophet. Table 1 summarises the blasphemy laws and the associated penalties.

A First Information Report (FIR) is the process through which the police take notice of alleged transgressions of the penal code and forms the legal basis for arrest. The Ahmadi Community Representatives explained the procedure for and consequence of filing an FIR. An FIR is lodged at a police station with the Station House Officer (SHO). Where the FIR involves a cognisable offence (those the

police can consider without the need for a court to investigate, including the blasphemy laws) the police have to take immediate action and arrest the person concerned. There is no time limit between the issuing of an FIR and the detention of the suspect(s), but once an arrest has taken place the police must complete their investigation within 14 days. Following arrest no legal assistance is allowed at the police station and the accused must be produced before a magistrate within 24 hours. The mission were informed that bail is refused in most blasphemy cases and only around 10% of such cases are found in favour of the accused. The order of events is significant: a case would be thrown out if the FIR is lodged after an investigation.

The Ahmadi community explained that once an individual receives bail, they are then required to appear at the case hearing approximately every month. The location of the bail

PPC	Description	Penalty
298a	Use of derogatory remarks etc., in respect of holy personages	Three years' imprisonment, or fine, or both
298b	Misuse of epithets, descriptions and titles etc., reserved for certain holy personages or places, by Ahmadis	Three years' imprisonment and fine
298c	An Ahmadi, calling himself a Muslim, or preaching or propagating his faith, or outraging the religious feelings of Muslims, or posing himself as a Muslim	Three years' imprisonment and fine
295	Injuring or defiling places of worship, with intent to insult the religion of any class	Up to two years' imprisonment or fine, or both
295a	Deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs	Up to 10 years' imprisonment, or fine, or both
295b	Defiling, etc., of Holy Quran	Imprisonment for life
295c	Use of derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of the Holy Prophet	Death and fine

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF BLASPHEMY LAWS AND PENALTIES

hearing will depend on where the FIR has been lodged. The mission were informed by the Ahmadi community representatives that FIRs are being filed against them by the police and local Mullahs following the direct intervention of the Federal Government. By way of example, the mission were shown a FIR dated 15 December 1989, filed by the SHO Rabwah,

which is against the entire population of Rabwah. The community has been charged under 298c and accused of practising Islamic social etiquettes and worship. This case is still pending (see Appendix B3: Police report (FIR) against the entire population of Rabwah, 15 December 1989).

The HRCP noted that changes to

the law had been introduced in January 2005 in an attempt to reduce the malicious or frivolous application of the blasphemy laws. In the revised procedure, a 295c blasphemy complaint must be investigated by a senior police official before the FIR can be lodged. However, the HRCP noted that this has had little impact in reality for Ahmadi cases, as police practice is for the Station House Officer to contact his senior officer who routinely gives permission to enter the FIR.

(to be continued next month)

[Minor amendments, such as suffixes ^(saw) have been added by the Editor Review of Religions, but in each case, these have been annotated as eg. ^(saw) – Ed]

Verse references to the Holy Qur'an item count 'Bismillah...' (In the Name of Allah...) as the first verse of each Chapter. In some non-standard texts, this is not counted and should the reader refer to such texts, the verse quoted in *The Review of Religions* will be found at one verse less than the number quoted.

In this journal, for the ease of non-Muslim readers, '(saw)' or 'saw' after the words, 'Holy Prophet', or the name 'Muhammad', are used. They stand for 'Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam' meaning 'Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him'. Likewise, the letters '(as)' or 'as' after the name of all other prophets is an abbreviation meaning 'Peace be upon him' derived from 'Alaihis salatu wassalam' which are words that a Muslim utters out of respect whenever he or she comes across that name. The abbreviation 'ra' or (ra) stands for 'Radhiallahu Ta'ala anhu and is used for Companions of a Prophet, meaning Allah be pleased with him or her (when followed by the relevant Arabic pronoun). Finally, 'ru' or (ru) for 'Rahemahullahu Ta'ala means the Mercy of Allah the Exalted be upon him.

In keeping with current universal practice, local transliterations of names of places are preferred to their anglicised versions, e.g. Makkah instead of Mecca, etc.

Succour and Help from Allah the Almighty Is Proof of His Existence — Part 2

By Rafiq Ahmad Hayat – Ameer, UK

Based on a speech delivered by Mr Rafiq A Hayat, Ameer UK, at the Jalsa Salana (Annual Convention) of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community United Kingdom 2006

At the saddest time of his life when the Promised Messiah^(as) knew that his father was going to die, a hint of an idea crept into his mind about his own future. He was left wondering as to who would provide him comfort after his father, when suddenly, in all His Majesty, Allah Almighty sent this revelation to him:

Is Allah not sufficient for His servant?

It was an admonishment from a Friend and a promise as well. Allah provides for His servants. Those who achieve closeness and

nearness of Allah, Allah becomes responsible for them. The help and succour that the Promised Messiah^(as) received time and again in his life, stands as a clear proof of the existence of Allah the Almighty. Indeed, the life of Promised Messiah^(as) is a vast catalogue of Allah's assistance and help to him at every step.

Another example of the succour and help of Allah the Almighty given to the Promised Messiah^(as) is taken from his momentous book, *Baraheen-e-Ahmadiyya*. In this book, the Promised Messiah^(as) declares:

‘Hence, He (meaning Allah the Almighty) has informed me that people will come to you and My Assistance will support you and people will

come from all directions and you will be provided succour.’

Then addressing the people, he further declares:

‘You can witness the succour of God, how it is coming and how it is being manifested. Everyone, who has eyes to see is running towards us’

So, my brothers and my friends! The above Divine glad tidings were given to the Promised Messiah^(as) when he was an unknown person living in an unknown place like Qadian. He made his announcement on the occasion of the first Jalsa Salana when only 75 were present. Today, the fulfilment of this great prophecy is being witnessed by the whole world. We, who are sitting here in this Jalsa Salana, can testify to the truthfulness of the succour and the help of Allah for the Promised Messiah^(as). The foundation of this blessed occasion was laid in 1891 in Qadian. On that occasion, the Promised Messiah^(as) declared,

‘nations are being prepared for this (Jalsa).’

And indeed I would say that we are all witness to the fulfilment of these words. Today by the Grace of Allah we are holding Jalsa Salanas throughout the world and at this Jalsa Salana that we are enjoying today – we have seen thousands and thousands of people from almost a hundred countries come to join in this very auspicious occasion and there lies the Mercy and the Blessings of Allah and His assistance to His servants. Also with the help of MTA (Muslim Television Ahmadiyya), the whole world is benefiting from these proceedings and through the blessings of MTA millions of people around the world, InshaAllah will be involved and will be participating in the International Bai’at Ceremony which will be InshaAllah taking place later. So for those who wanted proof and all those people who disbelieve about the coming of the Promised Messiah^(as) – they only have to look but they need the eyes so

that they can look and all those people and all those Muslims who criticise the coming of the Promised Messiah^(as), if with a bit of open-mindedness they looked at the blessings that this Jamaat has received from Allah Almighty, they need not have any more convincing about the succour that the Promised Messiah^(as) received from Allah the Almighty.

The Companions of the Promised Messiah^(as) were infused with the same piety and righteousness as were the Companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(saw) and they also witnessed the existence of Allah the Almighty.

There are so many examples of the Companions of the Promised Messiah^(as) who have had their personal experiences of the succour and assistance from Allah the Almighty.

The devotion and obedience of Hadhrat Maulvi Nooruddeen Khalifatul Masih I^(ra), to the Promised Messiah^(as) is well documented. His love and his

loyal faith in God is also very well documented. There is one incident that I would like to relate. He once received a message from the Promised Messiah^(as) who at that time was with his father-in-law Hadhrat Mir Nasir Nawab Sahib who was not feeling well and the Promised Messiah^(as) had gone to see him in Delhi. The Promised Messiah^(as) sent a telegram to Hadhrat Maulvi Sahib and asked him to come and join him in Delhi. When Hadhrat Maulvi Sahib received the message – the person who had sent the telegram said ‘Come immediately’ – Maulvi Sahib was in his clinic when he received the telegram – and it is said that he stood up, while he was in surgery, sent a message to his wife, dismissed all the patients and left for Batala. Now there are many instances in the life of Hadhrat Maulvi Sahib that show that his blind faith took him through some very difficult situations. Very often he would make these journeys totally unprepared not having a penny in his pocket or any food yet Allah continued to

help him. And in this instance as well Allah came to his assistance. A Hindu citizen saw Maulvi Sahib at the station and requested him to see his wife in town who was ill. Maulvi Sahib apologised and said he had to catch a train to Amritsar. So the Hindu gentleman immediately went and fetched his wife to the station and Maulvi Sahib was able to give her medication. Immediately after, the gentleman went and bought the ticket for the train and also gave him money. When Maulvi Sahib had left he had absolutely no money to even buy a ticket for that train. There you see the example of Allah's succour and the blind faith that some of the companions had.

Another example of a companion of the Promised Messiah^(as) that I want to quote is from the life of Hadhrat Ghulam Rasool Rajekee Sahib. When we read his life story in *Hayaat-a-Qudsi*, we find that every instance, every moment of life was governed by his obedience of the Promised Messiah^(as) and in the supplication to Allah the Almighty. In

return, he was rewarded with exceptional acceptance of prayer and was aided and provided succour by Allah the Almighty against the opponents of the Promised Messiah^(as).

Hadhrat Maulvi Rajekee Sahib narrates that a delegation of four Ulama was sent on a tour of India by Hadhrat Khalifa-tul-Masih II^(ra). The delegation consisted of Maulvi Rajekee Sahib, Maulvi Muhammad Salim Sahib, Mahasha Muhammad Umar Sahib and Giani Ibadullah Sahib. In one of the important Tabligh meetings to a large gathering listening to the speeches, it started to rain and all chairs and carpets started to get soaked in water. All Ahmadi speakers felt great anxiety that this opportunity to convey the message of Islam may be missed. Maulvi Rajekee started to pray and says: as I finished my prayer, the rain slowed down and I announced that people should sit down because the rain will stop. Alhamduolillah, we were able to pass our message without any interruption.

Indeed, I can also narrate my personal experience of this nature. When I was Sadar Ansarullah UK and we were holding our Annual Ijtema in Islamabad – we were making preparations when dark clouds descended and it started to rain. I immediately telephoned Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV^(ru) and explained the situation. At the same time, all Ansar present joined in a prayer and supplicated to Allah to use His Mercy and stop the rain so that the noble purpose of this Ijtema could be achieved. It will, forever remain with me as an endearing memory of an exceptional experience: it was entirely through the Mercy of Allah that the rain stopped immediately and we were able to continue our programme. For all those present it was a manifestation of Allah’s mercy on us as we continued to receive reports from the new arrivals that heavy rainfall continued a short distance away from Islamabad where the Ijtema was being held.

It saddens me to think why is it

that nowadays, people think or feel that they have not been able to witness the existence of God through His Beneficent manifestation?

The Reformers in Islam at the head of each century and the Promised Messiah^(as) in the 14th century came to remind us about the existence of God and about the necessity to achieve the nearness of Allah the Almighty. The converse with Allah and direct address from Allah the Almighty to each human being requires total and absolute surrender to the Majesty of Allah, before Whom nothing can exist. In an ordinary sense it means to surrender ourselves to the Will of Allah, and in the highest sense it means the awareness of nothingness before Him. As the Holy Qur’an states:

All that is on it (earth) will pass away. And there will remain only the Person of thy Lord, Master of Glory and Honour.

(Ch.55:Vs.27-28)

The very name of the religion of Islam comes from this reality, for the Arabic word ISLAM means our surrender to God as well as the peace that issues forth from this surrender. However, this surrender must involve our whole being and a person must become a perfect servant (ABD) in the sense of following all His commandments. It means living while following the Divine Law and the ethical teachings of Islam, striving in life according to religious teachings to the extent of one's ability and then being resigned to the Will of God and what destiny places before us. This is what the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(saw) taught us. When the Muslims all over the world forgot that message, the Promised Messiah^(as) came to revive and remind humanity at large. The Promised Messiah^(as) has stated that one of the purposes of his coming was to show people how to achieve the nearness of Allah the Almighty. We, who have accepted him and have the privilege of being Ahmadi Muslims, have a duty to cultivate in ourselves the

surrender to the Will of Allah. Only then will we witness the succour of Allah for us and we will realise the existence of Allah the Almighty. The Promised Messiah^(as) declares:

‘Pay attention those of you who have ears; what does God require from you? Only this that you become His alone and have no equals with Him, neither on this earth nor in heaven. Our God is the One Who is alive today as much as He ever was, He speaks today as He did in the past and He hears as He used to hear. To think that He only listens but does not speak in this age is a vain belief. Indeed, He both hears and speaks. All His attributes are eternal and everlasting. None of His attributes were suspended. He is the same Unique Being Who has no associates. He has neither son nor wife and He is the same Eternal Being Who is peerless and there is none like Him and there is no one similar to Him in His attributes. He is near yet far

and distant yet close and He is the highest of the high...'

(Roohani Khazain, Alwassiyat, pp.309)

We have a living God Who hears and answers. It is only for us to seek Him in the truest sense by a total and complete surrender. Only then will we experience the existence of that Majestic Reality Who has all the attributes of Beneficence and Mercy. We are fortunate to have all the guidance in the Holy Qur'an and the commentaries that have been left for us by the Promised Messiah and his Khulafa. Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V has been continuously guiding us in these matters. It is prayers, supplications and our obedience to our beloved Khalifa that can help us to achieve the nearness of Allah. Only at that stage can we expect the succour and help from Allah the Almighty.

Let us remember the purpose of our creation. As the Holy Qur'an says:

And we created not the

heaven and the earth and all that is between the two in play.

(Ch.21:V.17)

The deepest purpose of this creation is explained in a famous Hadith-e-Qudsi (a sacred saying of the Holy Prophet^(saw)) in which Allah speaks in the first person through the mouth of the Holy Prophet^(saw): 'I was a hidden treasure. I loved to be known. Therefore, I created the creation so that I should be known.'

The purpose of creation of this humanity is God's love of the knowledge of Himself to be realised by His central agent on earth – human beings. For a human being to know God and to understand God is fulfilling the very purpose of his creation.

Once we have developed that love, we will witness the existence of God at every step and every instance of our lives. His succour will be manifested for us. Indeed He will become our eyes through which we see, our ears through which we hear

and our hands that will perform the deeds that are loved by God.

There are numerous examples and I am sure that everyone sitting in this very auditorium will be able to relate their own personal examples in this respect. Allah even today speaks to his people. Allah today assists all those who have prayed sincerely to Him, He has come to our assistance. Indeed the very fact that we are sitting in this hall, the acquisition of this site, and being able to hold a Jalsa Salana in a very short time is again proof of Allah's assistance and how He comes to the aid of His people. You have no idea of the number of problems and the number of issues that arose in trying to get to this stage – but at every endeavour God Almighty assisted us and paved the path for us in allowing this magnificent event to take place on this new site.

As my time is running out, I would like to say we should always remember that the reason for our creation is to attain closeness to God Almighty. We

should supplicate to Him. We should pray to Him. We can talk to Him in any language that we like, as I quoted the earlier example of the shepherd, God loves to hear from His people. God communicates with His people. People see dreams which are fulfilled. You will have heard in Huzur's sermon yesterday how people through their dreams were brought close to the Jama'at and I am sure that each and every one of you sitting here would have their own personal experiences. Therefore it is very important that we continue to supplicate to God Almighty – the world that we live in is seeing a lot of strife at the moment. We need Allah's assistance and through prayers and through supplication to Him, that is the only way that Allah's assistance will come and the strife and the hurt that humanity is going through today will achieve a peaceful end. May Allah bless you all.

UZBEKISTAN –

Cradle of Islamic Thought

By Fazal Ahmad, London, UK

Introduction

When we look at great historical figures and places in Islamic history, many of them seem to originate in the land now known as Uzbekistan. Examples include Imam Bukhari, Tirmidhi, al-Biruni, Ibn Sena and Timur, who came from such exotic places as Bukhara and Samarkand. We also know that the ancestors of the Promised Messiah^(as) emigrated from Samarkand to India. So Central Asia, and in particular Uzbekistan, is worthy of greater research to understand the state of the Islamic nation there that spawned such great leaders and thinkers.

Historical Background

Uzbekistan holds a pivotal position in the dusty plains between Russia to the north and India to the south, between the Arabs and Persians to its west and the Chinese to its east. So as

the major Silk Route trade routes emerged, so too did the great centres of Uzbekistan emerge as trading posts for ideas and religions as well as commodities. The name Uzbek means true leaders and nobles which is appropriate as we will see later. The name probably derives from Özbeg who ruled from 1313 - 1340 and is often associated with the adoption of Islam by the Mongols.

There has been population in Uzbekistan for over 3000 years, with the Sogdians, Bactrians and Khwarizm tribes later becoming absorbed into the Persian empires of Cyrus the Great, the greatest of Persian rulers. Three centuries later, Alexander the Great conquered these tribes in 327 BCE and his wife was the daughter of a Bactrian chief. Thereafter, the region was again part of the Persian Empire, and

remained under their influence for centuries. So when the Persians accepted Islam, Uzbekistan followed quickly. This was a great period of cultural leadership for the cities of Bukhara, Khiva and Samarkand.

In recent history, the Russians established their influence in the 19th century as part of the 'Great Game' between Russia and Europe, and after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, Uzbekistan became a state within the Soviet Union. It finally gained its freedom in 1991.

Islam in Uzbekistan

At a spiritual level, Islam came to the region relatively early, but it took longer for Islam to gain political currency.

Muslims first gained political control within Uzbekistan under the leadership of Qutaiba ibn Muslim, the governor of Khurasan in Persia. Qutaiba made inroads as early as 706 with the capture of Bukhara and after 710, Samarkand and

Khwarizm. However, it took time to establish Islam properly, as there was a political power struggle taking place between the Persians, Turks and Chinese, and it was not until the battle of Talas against the Chinese in 751 that Muslims had a chance to prosper and settle in Central Asia.

After that, Islam flourished and scholarship, already a craft of the Persians, thrived even more in this region. Interestingly, Uzbekistan was regarded as Persia at the time because of the huge influence of Persia over all of Central Asia. Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), one of the greatest Islamic historians, tells us of the breadth of their influence on science and scholarship:

'They invented the rules of (grammar) and made it into a discipline (in its own right) for later (generations to use). Most of the Hadith scholars who preserved traditions for the Muslims also were Persians, or Persian in language and upbringing, because the discipline was



Map of Uzbekistan and Central Asia

widely cultivated in the Iraq and the regions beyond. Furthermore, all the scholars who worked in the science of the principles of jurisprudence were Persians. The same applied to speculative theologians and to most Qur'an commentators. Only the Persians engaged in the task of preserving knowledge and writing systematic scholarly works.'

(Khaldun, p.429-430)

In his description, Ibn Khaldun describes the regions beyond and these included Uzbekistan and the neighbouring states. He also points out the contributions made to science, Hadith literature and law as we will see later.

Uzbek Cities

Samarkand

Samarkand is one of the oldest cities dating from 700 BCE, and recently was given its World Heritage status by UNESCO as the 'Crossroads of Cultures'.

With its central position on the Silk Route, it has been a trading centre for three millennia. It was the capital of the Sogdians until Alexander the Great captured it in 329 BCE. He knew the city as Marakanda. He is quoted as saying, *‘everything I have heard about Marakanda is true, except that it is more beautiful than I ever imagined.’*

Its status as a crossroads of cultures came to the fore several times as technology was traded from east to west. An example was the handover of paper-making technology from China to create the first Islamic paper mill in Samarkand after 751. Paper then reached Europe via Islamic Spain.

The town’s status grew and its cultural importance reached a peak when it was tragically sacked by the Mongols in 1220, and most of its population was massacred. It again came to the fore in 1370 when the great ruler Timur, made it the capital of his growing empire, and encouraged craftsmen from all parts of his

empire to settle there. His grandson Ulugh Beg effectively created a university in the city attracting many of the best scholars of the region there.

Sadly, in the 16th century, the capital of the region was moved to Bukhara and the city went into decline. Having been abandoned after an assault by the Persian Nadir Shah, the Russians took control of Samarkand in 1868 and its position grew further once the Trans-Caspian Railway reached through the city.

The city has many sites that call to mind its great past and position in the Muslim world. Central is the Registan, a magnificent square surrounded by huge madrassahs from 600 years ago (Ulugh Beg madrassah dates from 1420). The Bibi Khanym Mosque is a restored version of what was once one of the largest mosques of the Muslim world. The front gate alone was 35 metres high.

The tomb known as ‘Shahr i Zinda’ is a grave complex around



Registan, Samarkand

the tomb of Qasim ibn Abbas^(ra), a cousin of the Holy Prophet^(saw) who is thought to have brought Islam to the region in 676. Fresh with the experience of the teachings of the Prophet^(saw), Qasim approached the Zoroastrians of Bukhara and Samarkand with missionary zeal, but the hostility of the locals led to him being decapitated (Marozzi, p.230). As such, the Shahr i Zinda has become a place of pilgrimage for regional Muslims. The great traveller Ibn Battutah visited here in the early 14th century and wrote in 1333:

‘The inhabitants of Samarkand come out to visit

it every Sunday and Thursday night. The Tatars also come to visit it ...’

(Ibn Battutah)

Khiva

Khiva is the modern name for Khorasam or Khwarezm. Its early inhabitants before Islam were Persians, but the main city of Khiva is recorded from the 10th Century when its inner city (Itchan Kala) was protected by walls. By the 17th century, the outer walls were built to protect the outer town (Dichan Kala).

Bukhara

Bukhara is a classical city of Islamic Uzbekistan. It was

founded in 500 BCE when Aryan immigrants settled here within a walled city. It was a significant city within the Persian empire, but also had a significant Buddhist minority. As the Silk Route opened, Bukhara gained prominence as a market city. After the Battle of Talas in 751, Bukhara became a Muslim city, and by 850, it was the capital of the Samanid Empire. It was established as the intellectual centre of Islam. At that time, not only were many Hadith collectors such as Imam Bukhari present here, it also became a centre of the Sufis, particularly the Naqshbandi Order. It too suffered the same fate as Samarkand under the Mongols, but recovered to play a prominent role under the Chagatays and Timur.

There are several great Islamic buildings in the city from the 16th century including the Kalyan minaret which is a 45 metre brick minaret, and the Kalyan mosque dating from 1514. There are other older monuments such as the Ismail

Samani mausoleum from around 900. Bukhara is also home to a significant Jewish population who have lived there since Roman times.

Tashkent

Tashkent is thought to be on the site of settlements from two thousand years ago in Ming-Uruk. With the development of the Silk Route, Tashkent grew in importance as a caravan crossroads. The Arabs understood its importance and took Tashkent in 751. It suffered the same fate as Samarkand and Bukhara under the Mongols, but regained its status by the time Timur began to grow his empire. Given the Mongol destruction, it is not surprising that most of the remaining Islamic sites are from the 15th and 16th centuries such as the Juma Mosque, the Kulkedash Medressa [we have used the local spellings throughout – ED] and tombs for people such as Yunus Khan (grandfather of Babur). The majority of Tashkent is a modern city with all of its trappings.

Famous Uzbeks

Al-Khwarizmi (790 - 850)

Abu Abdullah ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi was born in Khwarizm (modern Khiva in Uzbekistan) in 780. Once Baghdad was established as a global seat of learning, al-Khwarizmi found his way to the House of Wisdom in Baghdad where he lived and worked for many years. He made many contributions to science including the foundations for algebra. As a later Director of the Baghdad academy of science, he directed a team to produce the first map of the known world. He produced the first astronomical tables. He became known as the father of algebra and astronomy.

Imam Bukhari (810 - 870)

The famous Sunni scholar Imam Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari was born in Bukhara in 810 CE. His father Ismail had also been a theologian and a Hadith scholar. As a young man, he had already memorised hundreds (some say tens of thousands) of Hadith. At the tender age of sixteen, he went to

Hajj with his mother (widowed now) and brother, and then from Makkah, he took the opportunity to visit many other Hadith scholars in Egypt, Iraq (Baghdad and Basra) and Iran on his journey back. He made other trips and was able to hear of traditions from hundreds of scholars across the Islamic world. When he returned to Uzbekistan, he compiled his *al-Jami al-Sahih*, a collection of authentic Hadith arranged in subjects. These are now considered the most authentic collections. One of his students from Nishapur (Iran), Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj later compiled his own collection now called *Sahih Muslim*. He died in 870 in the village of Khartank near Samarkand where his grave is still visited today.

al-Tirmidhi (824 - 892)

Another famous Hadith collector, Abu Isa Muhammad ibn al-Tirmidhi was born in Termez (Arabic Tirmidh) in Uzbekistan and was a contemporary of Imam Bukhari, Imam Muslim and Abu Dawud. He was from the Banu

Sulaym tribe and like Bukhari, he also travelled and consulted across the Muslim world. His collection of Hadith is known as *Jami al-Tirmidhi*.

Al-Biruni (973 - 1048)

Abu Rehan al-Biruni was born in Khwarazm (modern Khiva) in Uzbekistan in 973. He travelled extensively in India long before Timur established his empire there. Indeed he was the first Muslim scholar to study India and Hinduism. He absorbed Indian science and culture and then wrote his *Kitab al-Hind*. He was a leader in many sciences, and ahead of his time, literally. He created the blueprint for an astrolabe with gears which could keep up with the motion of the earth. This was the early forerunner to modern clocks. He also famously described the Milky Way as a ‘collection of countless fragments of the nature of nebulous stars.’ His major contributions were to mathematics where he advanced arithmetic, ratio theory, algebra and geometry.

Ibn Sena (980 - 1037)

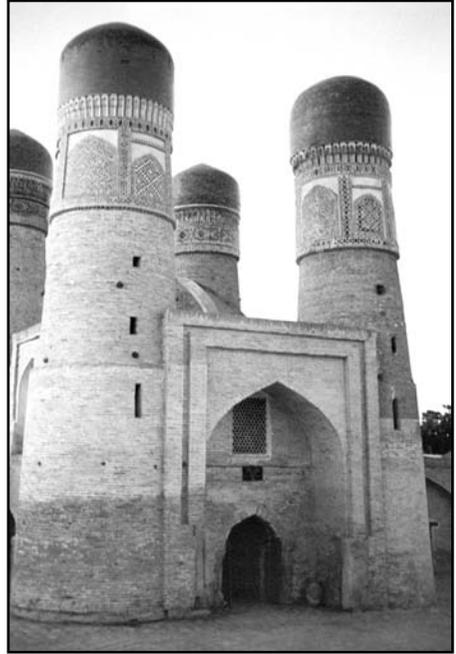
Abu ‘Ali Al-Hussain ibn Sina (known as Avicenna in the West) was born in Afshana near Bukhara in Uzbekistan into an Ismaili Shia family. He was educated in Bukhara by some of the best scientists of his time, and had memorised the Qur’an by the age of 7. As his reputation grew, he came under the patronage of the vizier of Urgench, and later researched in Merv, Nishapur, Gorgan and other places around the Persian empire. He wrote two major works among his 450+ books, *al-Shifa* being an encyclopedia of humanities, medicine, and sciences, and the second, *al-Qanun* became the most comprehensive study of medicine in history. Indeed, for almost 700 years, this was the standard text on medicine in European Universities. He died of Colic in Hamadan, modern Iran.

Timur (1336 - 1405)

Timur bin Taraghay Barlas is often referred to as Tamerlane in the West, and was a great military leader of the 14th Century who founded the

Timurid Empire. He was born in 1336 in Kesh (modern Shahr-e-Sabz) near Samarkand. The son of the leader of the Barlas tribe who had also been the first of his contemporaries to accept Islam, Timur followed in his father's footsteps by leading not just the Barlas tribe, but extended his empire rapidly to encompass eastern Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan and western India. His motto is quoted as being *'As there is only one God in Heaven, so there should be only one king on earth'*. However his advances were often brutal and made him enemies. In taking Damascus and Baghdad, two of the great Muslim cities of the time, his troops massacred most of the civilians and deported those with skills they needed, back to Samarkand. This created hostility from both the Ottoman Turks and the Mamluk's of Egypt.

Timur tried to advance against the Ming dynasty to the east to get control of China, but was finally defeated by the plague



Char Minar Mosque, Bukhara

and fever. His body was taken back to Samarkand where it lies today at the Gur-e-Amir tomb. His legacy was mainly through one of his descendents, Babar. After defeat to Shaybani in 1512, Babar travelled to India and established the famous Mughal Empire. The rest of Timur's empire fragmented soon after his death in 1405, and while Timur's son Shah Rukh ruled eastern Persia (Iran), his grandson Ulugh Beg made Samarkand an intellectual centre.

Ulugh Beg (1393 - 1449)

Mirza Muhammad Targhai Ulugh Beg was a grandson of Timur. He was born in Sultaniyeh in Persia, but as a young man, settled to become the governor of Samarkand in 1409 at the age of 16. Just a few years later in 1417, he established a madrassa (university) in Registan Square, Samarkand. He invited many senior Islamic scholars to study and teach there including astronomers, mathematicians and other academics including al-Kashi. In 1428, his interest in astronomy led him to build a huge observatory 'Gurkhani Zij' in Samarkand, through which one of the greatest star catalogues was compiled. He also had the solar year calculated to be 365.257 days, which was only improved upon by the great astronomer Copernicus. He found a new great role for Samarkand, and in honour of his achievements, a crater on the Moon was named after him in 1830.

The Promised Messiah^(as)

Hahdrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad,

the Promised Messiah^(ra) came from a Mughal family in the Indian town of Qadian. The family trace their lineage back to 1530 when Mirza Hadi Beg, a chieftain of Samarkand, moved out and emigrated to the Punjab region of India accompanied by his family and staff, following in the footsteps of Babar from the same town. Mirza Hadi Beg himself was descended from the uncle of Timur (Adamson) and was therefore from royal stock.

Mirza Hadi Beg had established a town called Islampur where he was also appointed the local judge (Qadhi). Over time, the town took the name Islampur Qadhi, and more recently Qadian. So the ancestors of the Promised Messiah^(ra) and the town he grew up in had very strong links to the Uzbek clans that had emigrated to India almost 500 years ago.

Modern Uzbekistan

The Uzbek khans ruled Central Asia for many centuries from Khiva and Bukhara until they were subsumed into the ill-fated

Soviet Union in 1924. For around 70 years, Islam was then suppressed by the Communists, and the great Mosques lay empty and silent. It was after the fall of the Soviet Bloc in 1991 that Islam began its revival in Uzbekistan.

The early seeds of discontent under Soviet rule came from Tashkent (the modern capital) under the banner of Birlik (the unity movement) formed in 1989. They began a push to make Uzbek the official language and to restore their culture. It was only as recently as August 1991 that the Uzbeks got their independence. Islam Karimov, moved from First Secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan to their President. His decades of power do not give the impression of popular freedom.

The modern country has a population of just over 25 Million, the vast majority of whom are Sunni Muslims and have now embarked on a journey to recover their traditions and

history from their Soviet slumber.

Conclusion

The great cities of Bukhara, Khiva and Samarkand have had lofty positions in history as centres of intellect and culture, although the Mongols themselves are not remembered with as much affection. The strategic significance of the region encouraged great rulers such as Cyrus and Alexander to take up roots, and later Russia and Britain vied for influence. Today, Russia, the USA and China have also seen this as a tactical theatre as they vie for power.

The greatest service of the Uzbeks to Islam was long before the Mongols when the great scientists, scholars and artisans left us magnificent collections of Hadith which are still treated as the most authentic sayings of the Holy Prophet(saw) to this day. At that time, the zest for learning and Uzbekistan's advantageous trade position on the Silk Route produced not just scholarship of the Qur'an and Hadith, but also

of all of the sciences and mathematics. Technology, such as clocks, paper mills and printing presses, and concepts such as algebra, the first world maps, star charts and even medical encyclopedias have all taken root in Uzbekistan. For this, the Persians must be credited, and the extent of interaction with other Persian cities such as Baghdad, Merv, Isfahan and Kandahar illustrates the flow of ideas across its realm.

Modern Uzbekistan is a shadow of the great period, and is still trying to recover its legacy from the veil of the Soviet Union, but the people could hardly wish for better examples to inspire them from their history.

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