

“Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation,  
and argue with people in the best manner.” (Holy Quran, 16:125)

# *The Light*

## AND

### ISLAMIC REVIEW

Exponent of Islam and the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement  
for over eighty years

April – June 2010

In the spirit of the above-cited verse, this periodical attempts to dispel misunderstandings about the religion of Islam and endeavors to facilitate inter-faith dialogue based on reason and rationality.

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احمدیہ انجمن اشاعت اسلام لاہور

◆ Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore Inc., U.S.A. ◆

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*The Light* was founded in 1921 as the organ of the AHMADIYYA ANJUMAN ISHA'AT ISLAM (Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam) of Lahore, Pakistan. *The Islamic Review* was published in England from 1913 for over 50 years, and in the U.S.A. from 1980 to 1991. The present periodical represents the beliefs of the worldwide branches of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore.

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Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad taught that *no* prophet, old or new, is to arise after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, *Mujaddids* will be raised by God to revive and rekindle the light of Islam.

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**1889:** Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founds the Ahmadiyya Movement.

**1901:** Movement given name *Ahmadiyya* after Holy Prophet Muhammad's other famous name *Ahmad*.

**1905:** Hazrat Mirza appoints central body (Anjuman) to manage the Movement.

**1908:** Death of Hazrat Mirza. Succeeded by Maulana Nur-ud-Din as Head.

**1914:** Death of Maulana Nur-ud-Din. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam founded at Lahore as continuation of the original Anjuman. Maulana Muhammad Ali elected as Head.

**1951:** Death of Maulana Muhammad Ali after fifty years of glorious service to the cause of Islam. Maulana Sadr-ud-Din (d. 1981) becomes Head.

**1981–1996:** Dr Saeed Ahmad Khan, an eminent medical doctor and religious scholar, led the Movement, at a time of intense persecution.

**1996–2002:** Prof. Dr Asghar Hameed, a distinguished retired University Professor of Mathematics, and learned Islamic scholar, served as Head.

**2002:** Prof. Dr Abdul Karim Saeed Pasha elected Head.

## Tolerance in Muslim-Sikh Relations in India: An Historical Appraisal

By Prof Henry Francis B. Espiritu

*[This article analyzes Prof. Dalip Singh's views regarding the tolerant nature of Sikh-Muslim relations in Mughal India. Prof. Singh argues that numerous instances of concord between Muslims and Sikhs occurred during the Mughal era, thereby diffing from the trend of characterizing this relationship as based on constant religious conflict. The author, Prof. Henry Francis B. Espiritu, Assistant Professor VII in Philosophy at the University of the Philippines-Cebu College, evaluates Prof. Singh's views by assessing the underlying reasons for the conflicts that transpired between the two communities and determining whether these conflicts were purely religious based or, rather, due to political and State considerations.]*

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Prof Dalip Singh, a scholar on Sikh Studies and senior-researcher of Sikh Research and Education Center (SREC) based in Chesterfield, Missouri, USA—had written six voluminous books as well as numerous scholarly articles on the history, philosophy, and theology of Sikhism. His books are veritable sources of information on the history of Sikhism and the dynamics of the relationship between Sikh and Muslim citizens during the Mughal Empire's era of ascendancy in India. These books are very helpful resources in the presentation of the flow of events describing the relations between the ten Gurus of Sikhism and the Mughal emperors contemporaneous with these Gurus.

The rise of Mughal rule directly coincided with the flourishing of the spiritual ministry of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith and the subsequent ministries of the nine Sikh Gurus succeeding him. Utilizing Prof Dalip Singh's books as bases of reference, I will evaluate and analyze his views regarding the dynamics of Sikh and Muslim relations in Mughal India by highlighting and analyzing the conflicts that transpired during this particular timeframe and determine whether the conflicts that occurred between the two communities—namely Sikh and Muslims—were mainly due to religious reasons or due rather to political and pragmatic exigencies of the time.

### The Historical Milieu of the Sikh Gurus' Relations with the Mughal Emperors

The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak (1469-1539 CE) had witnessed the defeat of the Turkic Lodhi rulers of Delhi and the rise of the Mughal regime under the leadership of the descendant of Timur, namely, Zahir-ud-Din Muhammad Babar Padshah. The defeated Turkic Lodhi rulers and the Mughal victors were professing Sunni Muslims. Both camps were related by bloodline to the great Turko-Mongol clan of conquerors (the Al-Khanids and the Timurids) who ruled Middle East, Central Asia, and North India. The change of rulership in the throne of Delhi—from the Lodhi dynasty to the new Timurid-Mughal conqueror, Babar—established more firmly the hegemonic hold of Sunni Islam in the Indian Subcontinent. The tenth and last Guru of the Sikhs, Gobind Singh (1675-1708 CE) struggled against the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Guru Gobind Singh fought Aurangzeb on egalitarian principles, and not so much of the religious differences that occurred between them. This conflict was triggered by the emperor's perceived policy of partiality towards Muslims at the expense of his non-Muslim subjects. While struggling against the elitist policies of the Mughals, the Sikh Gurus also fought against the caste-ridden and discriminatory social practices of medieval Hinduism. This, in a gist, is the historical milieu and framework of the development of Sikhism as an egalitarian religio-philosophical faith.

### Brahminic "Historical Myths" Purporting to Divide Sikhs and Muslims in Mughal India

Reading Prof Dalip Singh's books, I noticed the objectivity of his historical descriptions regarding the relations between the Sikh Gurus and the Mughal Muslim rulers. Prof Singh identified what he calls "Brahminic historical concoctions" regarding many alleged events that transpired between the Sikh Gurus and the Mughal rulers.<sup>2</sup> Such historical myths purport to enlarge and blow out of proportion the Muslim-Sikh conflicts. According to Prof Dalip Singh, Brahmin historians who were intensely opposed to the egalitarian and monotheistic message of Sikhism "concocted" these historical myths. Moreover, these Brahminic "historical concoctions" have adverse effects on the harmonious relations between Sikh and Muslim communities.<sup>3</sup>

Prof Singh's aim in re-evaluating Sikhism's history is to sort-out, reject, and dismiss "myths" that tend to destroy the cordial and concordant relations

between Muslims and Sikhs in medieval Mughal India. Take for example his strong denial of the popular story propagated by Brahmin historians (a story that is unfortunately believed by most Sikhs as factual history) that a Pathan mercenary under the order of Emperor Bahadur Shah martyred Guru Gobind Singh. Prof Singh utilized more than one-sixth of the total pages of his book, *Life of Guru Gobind Singh* to prove that the story is a “Brahminic concoction” intended to sow discord among Muslims and Sikhs. He analyzed the factual events surrounding the last eighty days prior to the assault of Guru Gobind Singh’s life to show that the story is a total fabrication. Likewise, he also narrated the harmonious, fraternal, and friendly relations that existed between the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah and Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>4</sup> He showed that Guru Gobind Singh and Emperor Bahadur Shah (formerly Prince Shah Alam before his coronation) developed close friendship right at the start of the latter’s enthronement to the Mughal throne. The emperor was a well-wisher of the Guru who offered the Guru a Mughal robe of honor symbolizing imperial camaraderie and favor. Bahadur Shah even assured the free movement of the Guru throughout the whole breadth of Mughal territories. Furthermore, the emperor issued a *firman* (edict) guaranteeing the safety of the Guru and his disciples during the whole duration of his reign.<sup>5</sup>

For Dalip Singh, it was Wazir Khan of Sirhind who was the mastermind of the Guru’s murder. Wazir Khan sensing the Guru’s closeness with the emperor had been sending hit men and spies to find opportunity to murder the Guru. Wazir Khan was afraid that the Guru—who was now a very close friend of Emperor Bahadur Shah—would settle scores with him as retaliation for the former’s murder of the Guru’s sons.<sup>6</sup> As per Dalip Singh, the Pathan and his assistant before they were killed in an encounter with the Sikhs directly confessed that it was Wazir Khan who deputed them to murder Guru Gobind Singh. Emperor Bahadur Shah, who was at that time in Maharashtra—hearing of the murderous assault on the Guru’s life—right away dispatched his surgeon (an Englishman named Mr. Cole) to treat the Guru’s wounds. Furthermore, the emperor issued immediately a strong directive to round-up the 700 Pathans in the immediate vicinity where the crime was committed; as they may have harbored the Pathan assassin and his assistant. Guru Gobind Singh, in his deathbed, asked the Emperor not to do so since such act would entail punishing the inno-

cents who may not be involved in the reprehensible deed.<sup>7</sup>

It is not my aim to prove whether Dalip Singh’s abovementioned assessment regarding the historical circumstances surrounding the death of Guru Gobind Singh is correct or not. My purpose in narrating the above historical analysis is to show the commendable efforts of Prof Singh in removing and weeding-out historical concoctions that may unduly affect an objective and just appraisal of Muslim-Sikh history during the Mughal era. Such gestures of fairness coming from a Sikh historian are indeed praiseworthy since there is no dearth of Sikh history books that exaggerate unhistorical polemics against the Mughal rulers. As I see it, Prof Singh set the tone of historical factualness and unbiased objective research by removing many unfounded and propagandistic misinformation regarding the Sikh Gurus’ relationship with the Mughal emperors.

#### **Cordial and Harmonious Relations between Sikhism and Islam during the Mughal Era**

Prof Singh noted various conflicts between Muslims and Sikhs and between the Gurus and the Mughal royalty. Nevertheless, he also emphasized that Muslims, particularly the Sufis, and their disciples (i.e., the ordinary Muslim masses), reached out and helped the Gurus in performing pious activities, in proclaiming the doctrine of monotheism, and in declaring the egalitarian message of liberation from caste inequities. For instance, Bhai Mardana, a Muslim musician, assisted and served Guru Nanak from the start of his ministry until the Guru’s demise.<sup>8</sup> The Sufi saint, Hazrat Mian Mir maintained fraternal friendship with Guru Arjan and remained constantly by the latter’s side all throughout the period of the Guru’s imprisonment and eventual martyrdom. Hazrat Mian Mir successfully achieved rapprochement between the Emperor Jahangir and Guru Hargobind.<sup>9</sup> It is also interesting to mention that it was Hazrat Mian Mir—who was a Muslim saint and not a Sikh for that matter, who laid the chief cornerstone of the holiest Sikh shrine, the *Harmandir Sahib* (the Shrine of the One God) in Amritsar, Punjab. Furthermore, the sacred scripture of Sikhism, *Aad Guru Granth Sahib* (AGGS), contains numerous hymns and spiritual poetry composed by Muslim saints, poets, and bards.<sup>10</sup> The above facts show not only the tolerant and all-inclusive nature of Sikhism but likewise, these facts provided historical instantiations of the deep friendship and goodwill

that existed between the religious leaders of both communities.

Likewise, in the lifetime of Guru Gobind Singh, many Muslim *awliya* (Sufi saints) enlisted themselves as the Guru's well-wishers; as example, take the case of Sayyed Bhikha Shah who consecrated the Guru during the latter's infancy and foretold of the Guru's future spiritual greatness.<sup>11</sup> Pious Muslims like Pir Budhu Shah and his followers wholeheartedly helped the Guru to the extent that Pir Budhu Shah sacrificed his sons to defend Guru Gobind Singh from the armed attacks of the Hindu *pahari-rajās* (hill-chieftains) of Himachal.<sup>12</sup> The Muslim soldiers, Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan as well as the Sunni saint, Sayyid Muhammad Nurpuri, helped Guru Gobind Singh escape the mercenaries of Wazir Khan, the governor of Sirhind.<sup>13</sup>

These historical facts, and many more, were narrated to emphasize that a broad section of Muslims from the saintly class (Sufi sheikhs), the Mughal soldiers, mystical poets, as well as ordinary Muslims, enthusiastically aided the Sikh Gurus in their noble cause for a tolerant, caste-free, and egalitarian India. Furthermore, these narrations show that there were numerous instances of amity, concord, and friendship between the Sikh Gurus and their followers, and the Muslim Sufi saints and their disciples (i.e., the ordinary Muslim masses).

#### **Not Islam Per se, but Mughal Discriminatory Policies that Caused Sikh-Mughal Conflicts**

Prof Singh's historiography brings home two very important points in his analysis of Sikh-Muslim relations in medieval India. Firstly, the conflicts between the Sikh Gurus and the Mughal emperors were brought about by the Mughal's elitist and discriminatory policies towards non-Muslims. Secondly, the caste-oriented Brahmins who detested Sikhism's egalitarian ideology, and who were firmly opposed to Sikhism's cutting criticisms of Hindu idolatry, ritualism, and casteism, oftentimes foment and exacerbate the Mughal emperor's conflict with the Sikh Gurus.<sup>14</sup> Prof Singh also brings into the fore the part played by obscurantist Brahmins in fomenting conflicts between Sikhs and Muslims. He identified the role of "Brahminic machinations" in creating divisions between these two egalitarian religions. Unfortunately, most Sikh histories fail to show the Brahminic instigations in the Sikh-Muslim conflicts. Prof Singh stands out in contrast with other historians in his emphasis that most of the troubles that were

experienced by the Gurus were not only due to the oppressions of the Mughal *Padshahs* (Emperors) but also due to the plots of upper caste Hindus who were fearful of the teachings of the Gurus against casteism. These Brahmins slandered the Gurus before the Mughal authorities.<sup>15</sup>

Prof Singh enumerated many examples of Brahmin machinations against the Gurus. The immediate successor of Nanak, Guru Angad, suffered from the disruptive plots of Brahmins who wanted him removed from the "guruship" for his spirited campaign against the caste system.<sup>16</sup> According to Prof Singh, there were Brahmins who aggressively supported the Udasi sect of Guru Nanak's ascetic son, Baba Sri Chand in order to create division among the Sikhs at the crucial time when the infant Sikh community suffered bereavement during the demise of Guru Nanak.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, a yogi-ascetic by the name of Shiv Nath Tapa—in collusion with local Brahmins—jealous of the rising popularity of Guru Angad among the masses and envious of the general acceptance among the ordinary people of the Guru's institution of casteless dining (*Guru ka langar*), vehemently endeavored to remove the Guru from preaching his doctrine of pristine monotheism and egalitarianism in the town of Khadur and other outskirt areas.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, Chandu, the person who is responsible for the martyrdom of the fifth Guru Arjan, Pandit Krishan Lal, who vehemently opposed the preaching of the eighth Guru Harkrishan, the upper-class Brahmins and hill-chieftains (*pahari rajās*), were Hindus and not Muslims.<sup>19</sup>

#### **Sikhism's Concept of Righteous Warfare**

##### **Compared with Islam's View of a Just Struggle**

Prof Dalip Singh explained at length the full significance and the metaphorical symbolism of the sword that Guru Gobind Singh required for devout Sikhs to perpetually carry in their person. The sword signifies the righteous authority of the One God.<sup>20</sup> It further signifies the ideal way of life for Sikhs, *viz*, that true Sikhs should be submissive to the divine authority of God in the service of truth, integrity, human dignity, and justice even to the point of martyrdom (*shahidiyyat*).<sup>21</sup> The Sikh sword is not meant to aspire for brute power and wealth—it is to be utilized for *seva* (service): service and submission to God's authority, service to the *Khalsa* or Sikh community, and service to the whole of humanity. This is the full religious significance of the sword in Sikhism. All the Sikh Gurus strongly detest and explicitly forbid

aggressive warfare; i.e., warfare for the sake of power grabbing and warfare that involves massacre of innocent non-combatants.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, those engaged in by Sikhs that contravene the regulative principles laid down by the Gurus were devoid of religious legitimacy because such wars run counter to the Sikh tenets concerning righteous warfare (*dharam yuddh*). Thus, Sikhism should not be blamed for wars waged by Sikhs that go against the regulative directives set forth by the Sikh Gurus.<sup>23</sup>

As of this juncture, let me say that the Sikh teaching on defensive warfare is in perfect consonance with what Islam taught regarding defensive warfare. When Prophet Muhammad sanctioned the use of the sword solely within the context of a righteous struggle, he solemnly warned the Muslims that the sword is to be used only as the last resort and in self-defense for the sake of truth, justice and humanity so that there will be no oppression and persecution that will overwhelm the Islamic community.<sup>24</sup> Warfare in the perspective of Islam and Sikhism is only utilized as the last resort for the defensive protection of the oppressed from the arrogant oppressors. Both religions believe that the sword is never intended for offensive or aggressive warfare. Defense for the rights and dignity of the human person is the only reason for drawing the sword—and only as the last recourse. Islam—as well as Sikhism—does not condone force and compulsion; both faiths stand for peace, tolerance, and amity.<sup>25</sup> Islam however provides for the just defense of ones' faith, life, and property.<sup>26</sup> In the same vein, the sixth Guru, Hargobind and tenth Guru, Gobind Singh (as the last preceptor of Sikh lineage of spiritual masters) provided for defensive struggle against oppression (but not aggressive war) in their act of arming the Sikhs with sword.

I strongly believe that the parallel and analogous teaching of both Sikhism and Islam regarding just, defensive, and righteous warfare can be positively harnessed and be efficiently utilized as collaborative venues for interfaith dialogue between these two religions. Furthermore, interfaith dialogue on the nature of what constitutes just warfare in Sikhism and in Islam can be effective settings for mutual forgiveness and reconciliation of historical animosities between Sikhs and Muslims since both communities will be able to reflect and analyze for themselves that the numerous wars that they waged against each other in the past may not have any religious warrants or justifications—and therefore the *raison d'etre* in many of

these past wars were only for greed and thirst for power, and thus devoid of spiritual significance.

### **Not the Islamic Shariah, but the Political Pragmatism and the Discriminative Policies of Mughal Bureaucracy Persecuted and Oppressed the Sikhs**

Dalip Singh did not hesitate to narrate the injustices perpetrated by the Mughal *Padshahs* to the Sikhs and to their Gurus; but I truly marvel at the proper balance and intellectual prudence shown in Prof Singh's nuanced analysis of the actuations of the Mughal Sultans vis-à-vis Sikhs. Let us take the example of Emperor Aurangzeb. His decisions were always affected by pragmatic considerations of appeasing bigoted Muslims and Hindus who constantly cajoled him in his royal *darbar* (court). Prof Singh argued that Aurangzeb's decisions were not specifically dictated by his commitment to Islamic Sunni orthodoxy; rather they were largely dictated by political pragmatism. He pointed out that during the ministry of Guru Harkrishan, the Sikh *masands* (feudal overlords) and the rival claimant to guruship, Ram Raie should be equally pointed out as among those who greatly persecuted the Guru and caused him much distress. They were the ones who presented their case to Aurangzeb and instigated the emperor to persecute Guru Harkrishan. The Sikh *masands* further appealed to the emperor to make Ram Raie the Guru instead of Harkrishan. In short, Emperor Aurangzeb's commitment to orthodox Sunni Islam did not have much to do with his decision to imprison by house arrest Guru Harkrishan; rather it was Aurangzeb's political and pragmatic move to please and to win-over to his side the rebellious Sikh *masands* and the rival claimant to the guruship, Ram Raie.<sup>27</sup>

Prof Singh deeply disagreed with most Sikh historians in their allegation that Guru Arjan was martyred because he committed treason against the reign of Emperor Jahangir by supporting the rebellion of Prince Khusro (the ill-fated son of Jahangir). Prof Singh reasoned that Guru Arjan was a peacemaker as shown in all his religious writings. In these writings, he exhorted the Sikhs to live in amity with everyone and to abide by the laws of the land. The Guru was a staunch advocate of inter-religious harmony as shown in the material as well as spiritual help that he accorded with impartiality to the needy Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh masses.<sup>28</sup> Given these facts, it is unthinkable that Guru Arjan supported the rebellion of Khusro.

Prof Singh also opposed the allegation that Guru Arjan was penalized for rebellion, which in the Mughal times was public execution, according to the *Shariah* law.<sup>29</sup> He argues—and I believe, rightly so—that in the Mughal era, penal provisions in the *Shariah* law was not applied to persons who are not Muslims. Legally speaking, *Shariah* is defined as “the entire law and regulations taken or inferred from Divine Revelation (*Qur-an*) and Prophetic Traditions (*Sunnah*) governing *Muslims* in their individual and collective lives *as Muslims* from the cradle to the grave (*sic*)”.<sup>30</sup> The Mughal rulers enforced the *Shariah* Law solely on the Muslim subjects and not to the *kufurats* (unbelievers), a technical term for non-Muslims.<sup>31</sup> It is therefore erroneous to claim that Guru Arjan, a non-Muslim, was punished according to the mandates of the *Shariah*. The Mughal officers in Lahore murdered the Guru, under the instigation of Chandu, a Hindu who was jealous of the Guru’s fame. The Guru’s martyrdom was also due to the slanders and intrigues of fundamentalist bigots (both Muslims and Hindus) in the court of Emperor Jahangir who for pragmatic reasons to remain in power, approved of the Guru’s execution; and never because of the Islamic Law (*Shariah*), which solely governed the life of Muslims.

To properly understand Emperor Jahangir’s verdict of putting to death Guru Arjan and whether such an order was based on *Shariah* considerations, it is relevant to provide direct quote from the *Tuzukh-e-Jahangiri*, which was Jahangir’s own personal memoir. The *Tuzukh* states:

In Goindwal, which is on the bank of river Beas, there was a Hindu named Arjan. Masquerading in the mantle of sanctity and piety, to the extent that he had lured many from the simpletons among the Hindus, and even from the unwary and dumb adherents of Islam, by his conduct and pretensions; and they had trumpeted far and wide his supposed holiness. They called him Master, and from every corner, ignorant hoi polloi crowded to venerate and place their trust in him. For approximately three or four generations, their business is becoming popular among the dimwitted masses. I therefore intend to put a stop to this vain affair and bring him to Islam, the right path.<sup>32</sup>

The abovementioned quote is the only text in the *Tuzukh* that directly mentioned Guru Arjan and his

religious activities. In the above text, Jahangir definitely identified the Guru by his name, Arjan. This text did not say anything to conclusively prove that Emperor Jahangir commanded the execution of Guru Arjan using the *Shariah* Law as the legal basis. I must stress that this particular quote from the Mughal royal chronicle, *Tuzukh-e-Jahangiri* did not support the allegation that the execution meted to Guru Arjan was punishment for propagating a different religion in contradistinction to Islam. The above text only shows Jahangir’s animosity towards Guru Arjan. The text however showed that Jahangir, in order to put an “Islamic sense or flavor” to his animosities against Guru Arjan, expressedly stated that he wanted to “bring him [i.e., the Guru] to Islam”—i.e., the Emperor intended to convert the Guru to the Islamic faith.<sup>33</sup>

Even if one argues that Emperor Jahangir invoked the penal code of the *Shariah* as the legal basis in putting Guru Arjan to death (a point that the *Tuzukh* did not assert), one must not forget the fact that the clear provision stipulated by preeminent *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) scholars like Hazrat Imam Abu Hanifa concerning the jurisdiction of the *Shariah* still clearly stands out—that non-Muslims (*kafir*) cannot be punished on account of Muslim Law since the *Shariah*, as explained by the four Imams of Sunni *fiqh*, governs only the Islamic *Ummah* (community of believers). Punishing a non-Muslim by appealing to the *Shariah* is at best misguided and erroneous if one adheres faithfully to the clear pronouncement of Hazrat Imam Abu Hanifa as to the non-inclusion of *kafirs* from the domains of *Shariah* jurisdiction.<sup>34</sup>

It should be borne in mind that the Islam which spread in Mughal Northern India, and adhered to by the *ulama* (religious functionaries) in the Mughal court is the Sunni Hanafi school of *fiqh*. If these *ulama* prescribed *Shar’ia* penalty to execute both Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur, these *ulama* were declaring something contrary to Islamic Law—their ruling (*fatwa*) can be considered null and void from the very beginning. Thus, I strongly feel that the Mughal emperors Jahangir and Aurangzeb outwardly feigned allegiance to Islam by executing the Gurus Arjan and Tegh Bahadur, and allowed their respective chroniclers to write that the Gurus were executed for propagating a different religion. All the above measures were done by the Mughal emperor for propagandistic agenda; to endear themselves and to appease the rising ultra-orthodox Naqshbandi *ulama* whose

influence were steadily growing in the Mughal *darbar* as shown in the meteoric rise of Hazrat Imam Rabbani Ahmad Sirhindi whose spiritual mastership (*Piri-Mureedi*) was acknowledged and sought-after by many *ashraf* (Central Asian Turks) nobles in the courts of both Jahangir and Aurangzeb.<sup>35</sup>

If the Islamic *Shariah* was not supposed to be the legal corpus used in giving capital punishment to non-Muslims (*kufurat*) since technically the *Shariah* was to be exclusively and solely applied to Muslims, then what punitive law did the Mughal emperors use in penalizing non-Muslims, in particular the martyred Gurus Arjan and Tegh Bahadur? This important question will be addressed in the next subsection.

### **The Mughal Rule was not an Islamic State in terms of Shariah Specifications but an Empire Governed by Turko-Mongol Traditions and Conventions**

To properly understand the Mughal policies in its dealings with Sikhism, it should be stressed that the Mughal Empire in India was never an Islamic State, nor was it intended to be a theocratic empire. Of course, I admit that within the Mughal administration, there were Sunni mullahs and Sufi mystics of varied persuasions and doctrines, in the same manner that there were also Hindu nobilities (i.e., the Rajputs) and Brahmin councilors. There were even agnostic philosophers in the officialdom of the Mughal emperors. Religious pluralism and multiculturalism existed in the Mughal court even during the reign of the ultra-orthodox Sunni Muslim Aurangzeb.<sup>36</sup> Objectively speaking, the Mughal Empire and its distant “cousin”, the Ottoman Sultanate in Turkey were pluralistic regimes. Yet there were times that orthodox Muslim nobles wanted to assert and were at times successful to some degree, in forcing the emperors to buy their own brand of Islamic fundamentalism.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, in the general span of its existence, the Mughal Rule (likewise, the *Osmanli/Ottoman Rule* in Turkey) was essentially pluralist, tolerant, cosmopolitan, and openly secular.<sup>3</sup>

According to Dr Alp Aqao lu, a scholar of medieval Mongol-Turkic governance, the criminal and penal laws implemented in Mughal India were not based on the *Qur-an* and *Shariah*. The penalties inflicted by Mughals and Turks were not based on the *Qur-an* but on the customary “*yasa-yarligh-e-Chaghtai Changgiz Khanli*” (i.e., traditional penal laws as practiced by Chughtai Turkic-Mongols and as

inaugurated by Genghis Khan and his immediate successors).<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the relatively brutal punitive laws of Mughal India were rooted in the customary criminal laws of the Mongols (*yarligh* or *yasa*), and were never based on Islamic *Shariah*. Halil Inalçik, professor of ancient and medieval Turkish administrative systems likewise added that the Ottoman Sultans of Turkey and the Mughal *Padshahs* (emperors) of India never intended to establish an “Islamic rule”—in the strictest signification of the term—during their periods of ascendancy.<sup>40</sup> Both regimes established the *millat* or *mazhab* system of governance in their respective domains. This system entailed that all *millat* (cultural groups) or *mazhabs* (Urdu and Turkic term for religious communities) within the Ottoman (and Mughal) realm were autonomous and therefore, free to establish their own religious and communal laws in their respective territorial domains; provided that these *millat* give their allegiance to the *Padshah*, pay the tributary taxes as token acknowledgment of the *Padshah’s* sovereignty, and provided further that the customary laws of the respective *millats* did not challenge the authority of the *Padshah* or the religious sensibilities of the Muslim majority.<sup>41</sup>

The preservation and expansion of their power in India were the overriding goals of the Mughal emperors. Their professed allegiance to Islam was likewise based on selfish pragmatism, i.e., whether their allegiance to Islamic orthodoxy will conduce or add to their security of power and territorial expansion.<sup>42</sup> The Mughal Rule was never an Islamic rule in the strict *Shariah* meaning of the term; instead, the Mughals only pragmatically utilized Islam for their own political convenience. Even an eminent orthodox Sunni Muslim saint like Hazrat Imam Rabbani Ahmad Sirhindi was likewise imprisoned by Emperor Jahangir when the former became critical of the unjust policies of the latter; thus proving the contention that the Mughal *Padshahs* were moved not by bonafide Islamic zeal but by court intrigues and by pragmatic acts to ensure the maintenance of their power.<sup>43</sup> These facts further confirm and establish the contention that Guru Arjan never rebelled against the *Shariah* Law nor was he punished on account of the Islamic Law. His death was due to the intrigues sown by intolerant and bigoted religionists, both Muslims and Hindus; and not because of the *Shariah* penal code *per’se*.

### Conclusion

Prof Dalip Singh's research in Sikh history is unique since it puts a concordant perspective on the history of Muslim-Sikh relations in the Mughal era without sacrificing historical facts. He was able to place a proper and balanced outlook to a very touchy issue in medieval Indian history. To write an objective and just appraisal of Sikh-Muslim relations coming from a Sikh scholar whose sole goal is to sincerely rectify historical mistakes for the sake of concord between the two communities, is indeed a very laudable accomplishment. It is very sad to read lopsided Sikh history books that always portray Sikhs and Hindus as "bhai-bhai" (brothers) and the Muslims as their common "dushman" (enemies). Oftentimes, these books engage in Muslim bashing without giving due credit to a very concrete historical fact that there were hundreds, nay, thousands of ordinary Muslims (and many Muslim Sufi saints) who were on the side of the Gurus in their struggle against Mughal injustice. Prof Singh amply recorded that there were many Muslims who, while remaining committed Muslims, were likewise cooperative in the endeavors of the Sikh Gurus for the reformation of Indian society. These Muslims even laid their precious lives, the lives of their loved-ones, and their properties for the egalitarian cause of the Gurus.

I am therefore grateful to Prof Dalip Singh's intellectual prudence, circumspect research, and objective treatment of historical facts surrounding Sikh-Muslim relations in medieval Mughal India. I truly admire his courageous and daring effort of rectifying Sikh history and of exposing the myths propagated by sectarian historians who pit Sikhs against Muslims. Indeed, I found his views on Muslim-Sikh relations in the Mughal Era, to be more authentic, lucid, and conducive in producing a more harmonious, tolerant, and concordant rapport between the contemporary adherents of Islam and the Sikh faith. By recovering the specific contexts or historical framework of the Muslim-Sikh conflicts in the past, and by highlighting the various historical instances of Muslim-Sikh rapprochement that existed in Mughal India, historians will be able to promote a culture of dialogue and mutual respect between these two faith-traditions based on past-shared history of amity and concord. ■

### References:

1. This is an expanded version of my conference paper which was first delivered in a lecture-forum entitled, "Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh Relations in Medieval Mughal India"

held at Guru Nanak Sikh Temple, Martillo St., Marikina City, Philippines on July 02, 2008. Years before, the first seminal drafts of this paper were written with full concurrence and approval of Dr. Dalip Singh of Sikh Research and Educational Center based in Chesterfield, Missouri, USA. Prof Singh himself, through constant e-mail communications with the author of this paper, had thoroughly reviewed the draft and made valuable comments of its contents. In the same manner, I am extremely grateful to Prof Dr Devinder Singh Chahal, the present chair of the Institute for Understanding Sikhism based in Quebec, Canada for his valuable critique and intellectual guidance in pointing-out parts of the paper that needs to be further reflected-upon, strengthened, or reconsidered from a different vantage point.

- 2 See, Dalip Singh, *Eight Divine Guru Jots (Light)*. Chesterfield, Missouri: Sikh Research and Educational Center, 2004; pp. 180-181.
- 3 Ibid., pp. 182-197.
- 4 Cf. Dalip Singh, *Life of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji*. Chesterfield, Missouri: Sikh Research and Educational Center, 2002; pp. 312-336.
- 5 Ibid., pp. 289-291, 302-304.
- 6 Ibid., pp. 328-331.
- 7 Ibid., pp. 329-330.
- 8 See, Dalip Singh, *Life of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and His Teachings*. Chesterfield, Missouri: Sikh Research and Educational Center, 2004; pp. 33-36.
- 9 See, *Eight Divine Guru Jots (Light)*, op.cit. pp. 178-179, 213.
- 10 Ibid., pp. 179-180.
- 11 *Life of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji*, op.cit., pp. 30-31.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 190-192.
- 13 Ibid., pp. 227-230.
- 14 *Eight Divine Guru Jots (Light)*, op.cit. pp. 16-24.
- 15 Ibid., p. 209-ff.
- 16 Ibid., pp. 13-17.
- 17 Ibid., pp. 17-19.
- 18 Ibid., pp. 22-24.
- 19 Ibid., pp. 13-24, 209, 177-178, 312-313; See also, *Life of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji*, op.cit. pp. 166-177.
- 20 See, Dalip Singh, *Sword: Symbol of Divine Authority*. Chesterfield, Missouri: Sikh Research and Educational Center, 2002; pp. 45-52, 97-98.
- 21 Ibid., pp. 53-64.
- 22 Ibid., pp. 55-56.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 *Al-Qur-an* 22:39; 2:190,193; 8:61.
- 25 See Maulana Muhammad Ali Lahori, *The Religion of Islam*. Columbus, Ohio: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam Lahore, USA Inc., 1990; pp. 405-443.
- 26 Maulana Muhammad Ali Lahori, a scholar in Quranic exegesis, in commenting and in summarizing the pertinent passages in the *Al Qur-an* related to *jihad* (e.g., *Al-Qur-an*

22:39; 2:190,193; 8:61) says unequivocally that these passages explicitly proscribed and condemned in clear and certain terms aggressive warfare in the name of religion. Even defensive warfare has *Shar'i* (Quranic) regulative principles characterized by fairness and humane-ness to the enemy combatants. In no way are non-combatant civilians be included in a defensive warfare. He exhorted Muslims to pay special care and attention to the *Shar'i* conditions laid down by the Qur-an and *Sunnah* (practice of the Prophet) concerning legitimate and defensive warfare.

27 See, *Eight Guru Jots (Light)*, op.cit., pp. 307-320.

28 Ibid., pp.169-203.

29 Ibid., pp. 184-185.

30 See, Bayazid Kurdi Shafii, *Shari Kya Hain? (What is Shariah?)*. Peshawar: Kitabistan Fiqhiyyah, 1979; pp. 50-53. **Emphasis** and *italics*, mine. See also, Huseyin Hilmi I ik, *Seadet Ibadiyye (Endless Bliss) Volume 3*. Istanbul: Wakf Ihlas Gazetçelik, 1980; pp. 57-69.

31 Cf., Ahmet Tuluykan, *Kitab-e Dowleh Islamiyeh (Book of Islamic Treasuries)*. Kutahya, Turkey: Ruhani Sohbetleri, 1942; pp. 34-47.

32 Kareem Maksod Zishan, *Tuzukh-i-Jahangiri: Literal Translation with Chronological Introduction*. Chittagong, Bangladesh: Bangla Institute of South Asian Studies, 1965; p. 144.

33 Ibid.

34 Huseyin Hilmi I ik, *Seadet Ibadiyye (Endless Bliss) Volume 3*, op. cit., p. 59. See also Bayazid Kurdi Shafii, *Shari Kya Hain? (What is Shariah?)*, op. cit., p. 53.

35 Cf. *Eight Guru Jots (Light)*, op.cit., pp. 184-190.

36 See, Halid Rufa'i, *Turkic and Mughal Governance: The Case of Ottoman and Timurid Sultanates*. Istanbul: Khas Turk Publishers, 1973; pp. 145-147.

37 As this was in the case of Aurangzeb's reign (and to some extent during Jahangir's rule) when the conservative Naqshbandi order of Sufis headed by Hazrat Imam Rabbani Ahmad Sirhindi became influential in the Mughal court. In his spiritual letters, collectively known as, *Maktubat*, Hazrat Ahmad Sirhindi repeatedly complained that the Mughal bureaucracy was very lenient towards the practices of non-Muslims; by tolerating and even by encouraging them. He asked the Mughal nobles to exert their utmost efforts in compelling the Mughal *Padshah* to implement pro-Muslim political and economic policies. The *ashraf* nobles who aligned with Hazrat Ahmad Sirhindi were relatively successful in persuading Emperor Aurangzeb to establish semblance of orthodox Islamic rule during his reign. Cf. Halid Rufa'i, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-149. See also, Zia, Haleem Sarwar. *Mujaddad alf Sani al Sirhindi and His Role in the Islamic Renaissance of Central Asia*. Karachi, Pakistan: Maktab-i-Irfan wal Islamiyya, 1959; pp. 225-226.

38 Ibid.

39 See, Prof. Alp Aqao lu, *Sirkari Maghul ve Vilayeti Turk (The Rule of the Mughals and the Government of the Turks)*. Iznik, Turkey: Yeni Kutuphane, 1967; pp. 21-59.

40 Halil nalçik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973; pp. 65-75, 89-118.

41 Ibid.

42 See, L.S. Stavrianos, *The Ottoman Empire*. New York: Rinehart Press, 1957; pp. 8-31.

43 Cf., *Eight Divine Guru Jots*, op.cit., pp. 137-139. See also Zia, Haleem Sarwar. *Mujaddad alf Sani al Sirhindi and His Role in the Islamic Renaissance of Central Asia*, op.cit., pp. 225-226.

## Monotheism

### A Review from an Islamic Perspective

By Sadar-u-Dean Sahukhan

[In this article, Mr. Sadar-u-Dean Sahukhan, Senior Prosecutor in Canberra, Australia, explains the concept of Monotheism from an Islamic perspective. Although Christianity, Judaism and Islam are recognized as sharing the commonality of belief in One God, the parameters of defining "monotheism" by each faith tradition are somewhat unique. Mr. Sahukhan explains the Islamic concept of Unity of God by analyzing the various forms of "shirk" (i.e. association with God) that the Holy Quran identifies. As a result, the seemingly straight-forward concept of Monotheism is shown to have a much deeper significance in the Islamic tradition.]

Islam is well-known for its emphasis on the absolute Unity of God. According to the Quran, the Unity of God implies that God is One in His person, One in His attributes and One in His works. His Oneness in His person means that there is neither plurality of gods nor plurality of persons in the Godhead; His Oneness in attributes implies that no other being possesses one or more of the Divine attributes in perfection; His Oneness in works implies that none can do that which God has done, or which God may do. This doctrine of Unity is beautifully summed up in one of the shortest and earliest chapters of the Quran:

Say: He, Allah, is One; Allah is He on Whom all depend; He begets not; nor is He begotten; and none is like Him" (Ch. 112).

This chapter is named *al-Ikhlās*, which means "purification of a thing from dross". This chapter's purpose is to purify the doctrine of the Unity of God of all dross of polytheism, in whatever form. It does

this by negating partnership or association with God in every sense.

The fact there is order in the universe is very telling. Because there is one law that pervades the whole of it, it points to one Author and Maintainer of that law. And the unity of law clearly suggests the Unity of the Maker. If, as the Holy Quran argues, we had more than one god, there would have been disorder:

If there were in them gods besides Allah, they would both have been in disorder. So glory be to Allah, the Lord of the Throne, being above what they describe! (21:22)

In fact, the Holy Quran commences with the acknowledgement that Allah (God) is the “*The Lord of the worlds*” (1:1). Allah is not the God of any one particular nation or tribe, but rather the Creator and Controller of the *worlds*.

The opposite of Unity (*Tawheed*) is *shirk*, which implies *partnership*. In the Quran, *shirk* is used to signify the associating of gods with God – whether such association be with respect to the person of God, His attributes, or His works, or with respect to the obedience which is due to Him alone. *Shirk* is said to be the gravest of all sins. We are told in the Holy Quran:

Surely, ascribing partners to Him (*shirk*) is a grievous iniquity (31:13).

We are similarly told:

Allah forgives not that a partner should be set up with Him and forgives all besides that to whom He pleases (4:48).

This is not due to a feeling of jealousy on the part of God – in fact jealousy, according to the Quran, is quite unthinkable as an attribute of the Divine Being. Rather, it is due to the fact that *shirk* demoralizes man, while Divine Unity brings about his moral elevation. According to the Quran, man is God’s vicegerent (*khalifa*) on earth (2:30), and this shows that he is gifted with the power of controlling the rest of the earthly creation. We are told expressly that he has been made to rule the world:

Allah is He Who made subservient to you the sea that the ships may glide therein by His command, and that you may seek His grace, and that you may give thanks. And He has made subservient to you whatsoev-

er is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all from Himself; surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect (45:12,13).

Man is thus placed above the whole of creation. If, then, man has been created to rule the universe and is gifted with the power to subdue everything and to turn it to his use and benefit, does he not degrade himself by taking other things for gods, by bowing before the very things which he has been created to conquer and rule? This is an argument which the Quran has itself advanced against *shirk*. Thus the words, “Shall I seek a lord other than Allah, while He is the Lord of all things” (6:165), are followed in the next verse by “And He it is Who has made you successors in the land.” And again: “Shall I seek for you a god other than Allah, while He has made you excel all created things?” (7:140). *Shirk* is therefore, of all sins, the most serious because it degrades man and renders him unfit for attaining the high position destined for him in the Divine scheme.

The various forms of *shirk* mentioned in the Quran are an indication of the ennobling message underlying the teaching of Divine Unity. These are summed up very appropriately in 3:63 of the Holy Quran:

That we shall worship (or serve) none but Allah and that we shall not associate aught with Him and that some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah. (3:63)

The most serious form of *shirk* is that in which anything besides God is worshipped. Such things comprise stones, idols, trees, animals, tombs, heavenly bodies, forces of nature, or human beings who are supposed to be semi-gods or gods or incarnations of God or sons or daughters of God. Another form of *shirk*, is the associating of other things with God, that is, to suppose that other things and beings possess the same attributes as the Divine Being. Some men take other people for their lords in this sense. The meaning of this was explained by the Prophet himself, in answer to a question put to him. When verse 9:31 was revealed – “they have taken their doctors of law and their monks for lords besides Allah” – Adiy ibn Hatim, a convert, asked the Holy Prophet who these *doctors of law and their monks* were, as he did not believe that anyone worshipped their doctors of law and the monks. The Holy Prophet asked him if it was not true that some people blindly obeyed their religious leaders in what they enjoined and what they

forbade, regardless of the merit or legitimacy of what was being said, to which Adiiy answered in the affirmative. This report shows that to follow the behests of great men blindly was also considered *shirk*. Another form of *shirk* is referred to in 25:43 of the Holy Quran:

Hast thou seen him who takes his low desires for his god? (25:43)

Here the blind submission to *one's own desires* is described in words used for *shirk*. Thus, belief in the Unity of God means that true obedience is due to God alone, and whosoever obeys either anyone else, or even his/her own low desires, in preference to the Divine commandments, is really guilty of *shirk*.

Of the different forms of *shirk*, idolatry is cited more frequently than all the others and is denounced in the strongest terms in the Quran. This is because idolatry is the most heinous form of *shirk* and also was the most rampant throughout the world at the advent of Islam. Not only is the act of idolatry condemned, which takes for granted that an idol can cause no benefit or harm to anyone, but the idea underlying the act is also explained as an erroneous and futile attempt at achieving the goal of worshipping God; as the Holy Quran states:

And those who choose protectors besides Him, (say): We serve them only that they may bring us nearer to Allah. Surely Allah will judge between them in that in which they differ. (39:3)

Apart from the above, another form of *shirk* denounced in the Quran is the worship of the sun, the moon, the stars, in fact everything which might appear to control the destinies of man. This is expressly forbidden in the Holy Quran:

And of His signs are the night and the day and the sun and the moon. Adore not the sun nor the moon, but adore Allāh Who created them. (41:37)

That various kinds of *shirk* mentioned in the Holy Quran show that, in the doctrine of Unity, it gives to the world an ennobling message of advancement all round, physical as well as moral and spiritual. Man is freed not only from slavery to animate and inanimate objects, but also from subservience to the great and wondrous forces of nature which, he is told, he can subdue for his benefit. It goes further and delivers man from that greatest of adversaries, slavery to man.

It does not allow to any mortal the dignity of Godhead, or of being more than a mortal; for the greatest of mortals (i.e. Prophet Muhammad) is commanded to say: "I am only a mortal like you; it is revealed to me that your God is One God" (18:110). Thus, all the bonds which fettered the mind of man were broken, and he was set on the road to progress. A slave mind, as the Quran plainly says, is incapable of doing anything good and great, and hence the first condition for the advancement of man was that his mind should be set free from the trammels of all kinds of slavery, which was accomplished in the message of Divine Unity.

The concept of the Unity of God carries another significance: the unity of the human race. Allah is the *Rabb* (Creator and Fosterer) of all the nations. The words thus signify that all the nations of the world are, as it were, the children of one Father, and that He takes equal care of all, bringing all to their goal of completion by degrees. Hence God is spoken of in the Quran as granting not only His physical but also His spiritual sustenance, His revelation, to all the nations of the world:

And for every nation there is a messenger (10:47);

There is not a people but a warner has gone among them. (35:24)

We further find that the Quran upholds the idea that God, being the God of all nations, deals with all of them alike. He listens to the prayers of all, irrespective of their religion or nationality. He is equally merciful to all and forgives the sins of all. He rewards the good deeds of the Muslim and the non-Muslim alike; and not only does He deal with all nations alike, but we are further told that He created them all alike, in the Divine nature:

The nature made by Allāh in which He has created men. (30:30)

*The oneness of humanity* is explained in the Qur'an by showing all mankind are dwellers in one home, having the same earth as a resting-place and the same heaven as a canopy (v. 22). In 2:22 of the Holy Quran, Allah Almighty states:

Who made the earth a resting place for you and the heaven a structure, and sends down rain from the clouds then brings forth with it fruits for your sustenance; so do not set up rivals to Allah while you know."

Attention is thus drawn to the oneness or unity of humanity, as if it were a single family living in one resting-place under one roof.

And this unity of the human race is thus a natural corollary of the doctrine of the Unity of God. This aspect is further stressed in the plain words that “Mankind is a single nation” (2:213) and that, “all are but a single nation” (10:19). The Holy Quran says that men and women have all been “created of a single soul” (4:1). Again, we are told that we are all descended from the same parents (49:13). All of the above confirm beyond doubt that, according to the Holy Quran, we are all the creatures of the one and the same Creator.

Muslims do not deviate from those things which have been brought by the Messengers, for that is the Straight Path, the path of those whom God has bestowed His favors upon, from among the Prophets, the Truthful, the Martyrs and the Righteous. The Tafseer (commentary) of Ibn ‘Abbaas for the verse “Allah (God)! al-Samad (i.e. the Eternally Besought of all)” explains:

*The Chief who is best in His Nobility. The Great one who is best in His greatness. The Tolerant One who is best in His toleration. The Omnipotent who is the best in His omnipotence, the All Knowing who is best in His knowledge. The Self which is perfect in all types of nobility and greatness - that Self is only God - the Most Revered and the Most Powerful. He alone has these qualities for they do not apply to anyone save Him. No one is equal to Him and no one is like Him.*

He being *Eternally Besought of all* proves all His Attributes are perfect, that He cannot suffer from any defect, He is in no need of anyone or anything. All are in need of Him.

The Holy Quran, the words of one God, the God of all the nations and all the people, confirms all previous prophets taught the one and the same thing. That is the unity of God. Chapter 21:25 states that all apostles taught there is only one God

“And We sent no messenger before thee but We revealed to him that there is no God but Me, so serve Me.”

Chapter 2:133 of the Holy Quran reads:

Or were you witnesses when death visited Jacob, when he said to his sons: What will you serve after me? They said: We shall

serve thy God and the God of thy fathers, Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, one God only, and to Him do we submit.

And Chapter 43:45 states:

And ask those of Our messengers whom We sent before thee: Did We ever appoint gods to be worshipped besides the Beneficent?

Now, you can only ask “Our messengers” through their respective scriptures. Thus belief in the Unity of God means that true obedience is due to God alone, and whosoever obeys either any one else, or his own low desires, in preference to the Divine commandments, is really guilty of *shirk*. In the current times, this is the greatest form of *shirk* and the form that is most overlooked. ■

## The Purpose for the Existence of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement (in the words of Maulana Muhammad Ali)

Compiled by Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

*[This article comprises quotations from the writings and speeches of Maulana Muhammad Ali in which he clarifies the purpose for the existence of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. In the selected quotations, Maulana Muhammad Ali explains what the true objective of the Movement is and, further, outlines the particular means required to achieve it. In doing so, Maulana Muhammad Ali, with such passion and desire, reminds members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat of the practical nature and spiritual basis of the Movement, the preservation of which must be forefront in all tasks in order for the grand objective of the propagation of Islam to be achieved. This article was first published in the Oct-Dec 2005 issue of The Light and Islamic Review and is being re-published due to popular request.]*

And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. And these are they who are successful (3:103).

The Holy Quran (3:103) declares that there should be a group among the Muslims whose sole objective is to present the religion of Islam to the world. It is to fulfill this grand task that *Hazrat Mirza Ghulam*

Ahmad, the *Mujadid* of the 14th century *hijra*, created “The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam.” Accordingly, the followers of *Hazrat* Mirza understand that it is to this end that they are to strive. Maulana Muhammad Ali, the founder of the “Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement” (*Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam*), who continued the original teachings and objectives of *Hazrat* Mirza after a split occurred within the Movement, has very clearly and ever so eloquently, clarified exactly how members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement are to satisfy the objectives of the Movement, thereby fulfilling the purpose for its existence. This article, therefore, consists of the words of Maulana Muhammad Ali in which he provides guidance in this matter for those who have resolved to be amongst the “party who invite to good and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong”.

### Objective of the Movement

Maulana Muhammad Ali repeatedly defines what, exactly, the **objective** of the Movement is:

The **real objective** of our Movement, as the Promised Messiah has stated repeatedly, is the propagation of Islam. Therefore, however much effort we devote to it, and however much of our own possessions and lives we give for this work, it will still be insufficient. My friends, Islam is in greatly troubled waters and its propagation is such a grand and mighty task that whatever you have done so far in this way is really only the first step. If you are firm in your belief of giving preference to the cause of religion over worldly ambitions, then come and support this cause with all your strength ... Worry not that you are small in numbers. It is determination that matters and not numbers: ‘How often has a small party vanquished a numerous host by Allah’s permission!’ (2:249). Allah’s permission will arrive when you spare no effort on your part ... Make all practical efforts and also spiritual efforts, in other words by prayer. ‘Our Lord, accept our prayer. You are the Hearer and the Knower’.” (*Paighan Sulh*, April 2, 1914, Appendix).

The **great aim** of our *Jamaat* is to spread the divine teachings and the religion of Islam in the world. So we must pay the fullest attention towards it ... The **real purpose** of the coming of the Promised Messiah was to spread the Holy

Quran in the world, to propagate it and to publish its translations ... If our *Jamaat* has taken upon itself this responsibility, then we must not forget it under any circumstances and always continue to try to fulfill it. What is meant by spreading the Holy Quran is that its meanings should be made available to people and they should be provided with the translation of the Holy Quran in their own languages ... At every opportunity and at every campaign that is put before you, you must keep your objective in view all the time as to how you can spread the glory of the Holy Quran. All other work that you do is in support of this objective. (*Friday Khutba*, February 18, 1938).

It is clear that it is only the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement that has maintained this as its principle objective. Aside from the issues of *nubuwaat* (prophethood), *takfir* (declaring others as non-Muslims) and *khilafaat* (successorship), this is also a material distinction between the Qadian and Lahore sections of the Ahmadiyya Movement. The Qadian section has, for all practical purposes, become another “sect” in Islam, having as its principle objective the spreading of its distinct, theoretical concepts and, thereby, attempting to bring into its particular community as many persons as possible. It is only the Lahore *Jamaat* that has continued the true mission of *Hazrat* Mirza by devoting all its efforts solely to presenting Islam to the world, without the ulterior motive of bringing people into its particular fold. In fact, the separation of the Ahmadiyya Movement into two groups, based on the objectives of each party, has been indicated by *Hazrat* Mirza himself. In a letter written to Maulana Muhammad Ali, *Hazrat* Mirza explains his “intention” to divide his community into two, as he writes:

It has long been my intention to divide my community into two groups. One group consists of those who are partly for this world and partly for religion, and are not able to withstand great trials, nor can they render important services to religion. The other group consists of those who enter through this door with full sincerity and faithfulness and in reality sell themselves in this path. I wish that God would include you in the latter group. (Letter dated 8 May 1899, copy of which is available in *Mujahid-i-Kabir*).

Thus, the split in the Ahmadiyya Movement, and the subsequent creation of the Lahore Ahmadiyya

*Jamaat*, was presaged by Hazrat Mirza and was, accordingly, a fulfillment of his intention to further the goal of propagation of Islam to the world.<sup>1</sup>

### Importance of this Task

As per the Quranic verse quoted above, Almighty Allah has decreed that a missionary group should exist among the Muslims, whose very existence is based on the objective of spreading Islam to the world. Moreover, the **importance** of this task is also indicated in the Quran. Maulana Muhammad Ali, in his *Friday Khutba* on May 12, 1944, while mentioning the Promised Messiah's passion for spreading the Quran in the world, explained:

Praising the Holy Quran and its scribes and those who spread it, Allah says: 'Nay, surely it is a Reminder. So let him, who will, mind it. In honored books, exalted, purified, in the hands of scribes, noble, virtuous' [80:11-16]. That is, the Holy Quran is a means of eminence, whoever wishes let him remember it; it is in honored scriptures, in the hands of scribes (*safara*) who are noble and virtuous. The word *safara* is plural of *musafir*, derived from *safr*, which has both the meanings of spreading and opening. It bears both the significances of writing the Quran and spreading it. Who are the safara?: Those who spread the Quran with translation and commentary.

Furthermore, in his *Friday Khutba* on December 17, 1937, published in *Paigham Sulh* on December 22, 1937, Maulana Muhammad Ali writes:

How many of us are working for our cause? A part of the *Jamaat* is idle, not realizing that there is so much work yet to be done. How many of us realize the importance of this work, and the greatness of our goal, that we have to spread Islam in the world. To spread Islam is no easy task. It is to continue the work of the Holy Prophet Muhammad as his successors. When you join this *Jamaat*, do not keep on thinking of worldly allure, thinking of how you could have achieved much success in the world if you had not come here, because there is no way here of achieving worldly gains.

The magnitude of the work that the Lahore Ahmadiyya *Jamaat* has resolved to achieve is not always easily comprehended. The greatness of this work is only truly appreciated, as explained by

Maulana Muhammad Ali, when understood as essentially being a continuation of the very task that was undertaken by the Holy Prophet.

### Difficultness of this Task

Another issue pertaining to the objective of spreading Islam in the world, aside from its importance, is its **difficultness**. To devote all of one's efforts in life for this cause is no simple task. Maulana Muhammad Ali explains:

What a great and glorious objective is facing you. It is as if a gigantic mountain is standing in your way and you have to remove it to clear the way. It is easy to move a mountain but the mission that our Imam has entrusted to us is of even greater importance. It is to spread Islam in the world. Is it a small and easy task? What encourages us is that God Himself has promised that He will make Islam prevail through this community. So there is no reason to panic or lose heart. Hazrat Mirza Sahib has himself written: 'I do not know which impossible paths I will have to tread, which thorn-filled wildernesses and deserted jungles I will have to traverse, so if anyone has delicate feet he should take leave of me now'. Friends! That time has now come and those difficult to cross ravines, thorny jungles and frightful wildernesses are to come before us which we must cross to reach the destination pointed out by our pious Imam and true guide. Earlier we had a man among us who was taking care of our affairs splendidly with great skill. To tell you the truth, we used to sleep without a care while that pure hearted man, the chosen one of God, comforted us like a loving mother and protected us from every difficulty like a shield. We were untroubled and carefree ... That era has now passed. That holy man who carried our loads on his own head, having done his work, has gone to meet his Creator in accordance with the divine promises. Now you have to shoulder all the burden, and you are the people who have to accomplish that work and bring it to completion ... (*Speech at University Hall, Lahore, on June 21, 1908, approximately 3 weeks after the death of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad*).

Maulana Muhammad Ali further explained in his *Friday Khutba* on September 23, 1949:

Every human being has a mission, and I have

now completed my mission to an extent. Man has only a limited capacity, but due to the grace of God such Islamic literature has been produced which is needed by the world today, by both Muslims and non-Muslims. Allah the Most High, by providing me the opportunity of sitting at the feet of Hazrat Mirza sahib, enabled me to render this service to Islam. If we now keep this prepared literature locked up at home, then there is no difference between us and the other Muslims. The real work is to make this literature reach the world. There is a very large English-speaking world, and then there are other languages to be considered as well.

We have not yet built up the determination to spread this literature in the world. Even one individual's resolve has great power, so if the whole *Jamaat* shows the determination to do it, then nothing can stand in its way. But we are not yet fully resolute. This literature in fact constitutes the weapons given to us by God the Most High. The literature in English was not produced in one day. It took forty years. Literature even in hundreds of languages is still not enough, but it needs immense effort and hard labor.

Thus, complete resolve, dedication and perseverance is required in order to achieve this *Jamaat's* goal. Mere "belief" in certain doctrines is not what constitutes being a member of the *Jamaat* that is to bring about the dominance of Islam in the world; as Maulana Muhammad Ali states above: "if we now keep this prepared literature locked up at home, then there is no difference between us and the other Muslims". Therefore, it is the *act* of performing difficult work and the *enduring* of many sacrifices for the cause of making this *Jamaat's* literature available to all that only truly qualifies one as being amongst a "*party who invite to good and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong*".<sup>2</sup>

### Means to Fulfill the Objective

Not only has Maulana Muhammad Ali guided the followers of Hazrat Mirza in terms of clarifying exactly what the objective of the Movement is, he has also outlined the specific means required to fulfill the objective. Along with the obvious practical work, financial contributions, etc, Maulana Muhammad Ali stipulates three other requirements: 1) establishing love of God and developing a close connection to Him, 2) prayer, and 3) creating and sustaining a

*Jamaat.*

### Establish Love of God and Develop a Close Connection to Him

In his *Friday Khutba* on February 18, 1938, Maulana Muhammad Ali explained:

We require the greatest strength in order to spread the Holy Quran and we cannot find that strength without having love for God and a close connection with Him. When you are overwhelmed by love for something you are attracted towards it unstintingly, sacrificing everything in its way. If you develop love for God then you will go on making sacrifices in His way without hesitation ... A *Jamaat* that is custodian of the Holy Quran must realize this well, as this is the secret of its success. Numbers do not matter. The size of the *Jamaat* is in fact only a means to achieve the end, but to consider the means as the real objective or to rely on it excessively constitutes nothing but *shirk*. It is only in trust in God that *shirk* does not exist. To rely too much on anything else is *shirk*. So you must create so much love for God and closeness to Him as if you are running towards Him. Only this is the means to your success and triumph.

### Through Prayer

Maulana Muhammad Ali further explained the importance of prayer and the key role it plays in the grand task of presenting Islam to the world. He stated:

The Holy Prophet has taught by his own example of rising at night and praying to Allah for long in solitude ... What an anxiety there was in the heart of the Holy Prophet that kept him so restless! Develop that same anxiety within your hearts. Rise up in the night, shed tears before God and seek His assistance by praying from the depth of your heart. Remember it well that ultimately the religion of Islam will succeed. And whose greatness shall remain? It is the greatness of Allah, the Quran and Muhammad the Messenger of Allah. The religion of Islam will most surely be victorious but your hearts should overflow with the urge and deep desire to make it happen.

Remember that no one can find enjoyment in prayer without getting up during the night. There should be such restlessness in your hearts that it wakes you up during the night: 'They for-

sake their beds, calling upon their Lord in fear and in hope, and spend out of what We have given them' [32:16]. Your warm and soft beds should not lull you to such sleep that you cannot wake. If at this time when the religion of Islam is crying for help, your heart is not so moved that you are restless to get up and cry before God, then you have achieved nothing. This is the only way you can be victorious ... Arise and cry for God's help to bring about the days of the victory and success of religion soon. The day when the condition of the *Jamaat* is that it rises at night and falls before God with the Prayer: O God, You sent this Holy Quran for the spiritual nurture of the world and its reform, and for establishing peace; O God, this world is going astray and moving further off from peace; O God, it was Your promise to make the religion of Islam prevail in the world, so bring that time and establish peace in the world through this Quran – that is the day success will lie at our feet". (*Friday Khutba*, May 16, 1941).

You have before you the mighty aim of making Islam to prevail in the world. Set yourselves to this work. No doubt you are making financial sacrifices, but still one thing is required and that is to develop the same overwhelming urge that was in the Holy Prophet's heart: 'Maybe you will kill yourself with grief, sorrowing after them, if they believe not in this announcement [18:6]. This was the pain that would not let him sleep. He would get up at night and fall in prostration before God. It is this type of inner state that leads to a manifestation of the power of God, and it is for such a person that the aid and help of Allah comes. Make your hearts the abode of such feelings. Rise up at night and pray: O God, You Who promised Your Holy Prophet the triumph of the religion to take place in this age, help us to become the means of fulfilling that promise of Yours. Grant us to witness the victory of Islam in the world so that the purpose of the coming of the Promised Messiah, Your appointed one, is achieved ...

As strongly as I believe that no power on earth can shake Hazrat Mirza Sahib, I also believe just as firmly that no one can destroy this *Jamaat* as long as there are people in it who shed tears at night ... And I want to tell the doubter, whether they are within the *Jamaat* or

outside it, that as long as there is a group in this *Jamaat* who cry in prayer at night, as described in the words 'a party of those with you' [73:20], this *Jamaat* will go on conquering the world with its spiritual strength". (*Friday Khutba*, November 28, 1941).

#### *Create and Sustain a Jamaat*

Maulana Muhammad Ali also explained that creating and sustaining a *Jamaat* is required in order to carry out the task of propagation of Islam. In his *Friday Khutba* on January 21, 1949, he stated:

We are also the holders of a trust. As a *Jamaat*, we have been made responsible for a trust assigned to us by the *Mujaddid* of the time. And what is that? His first book after claiming to be the Promised Messiah was *Fath-i-Islam*, and in it he explained that the purpose of his advent was to spread the word of Allah and the light of the Holy Prophet Muhammad in the world and to come to the aid of the Muslims. After this, he writes that for the attainment of this purpose, his work is divided into five kinds. Out of the five kinds that he enumerated, the fundamental ones are the first one and the last one. The first is the writing and producing of literature and the last is forming a *Jamaat*. These two encompass the ones in between, so that booklets and notices come under the production of literature, and maintaining the guest-house is connected with the formation of the *Jamaat*.

In reality, therefore, he has given us two main tasks: one is to spread the divine religion by means of writings and literature, and the other one is to form a *Jamaat*. The *Jamaat* is like an army and the literature is its weapon. These are the two means whose real purpose is the revival of the faith".

Therefore, in order for the grand task of producing and distributing literature throughout the world to be achieved, a *Jamaat* must be formed to nourish, sustain and reinforce this objective. The organization of the *Jamaat*, as explained by Maulana Muhammad Ali, and unlike the *Khilafat*-system practiced by the Qadian Section, is only a means to achieve the ultimate goal. Maulana Muhammad Ali illustrates this point by stating:

These days there is much clamor about organization, it being said that the *Jamaat* should be

well organized and large as this is the way to uphold the reputation of the Movement. But if the honor of the *Jamaat* is to be maintained, it would only be through the service and propagation of the Quran. There is no doubt that organization is commendable, but it is not the real means of the honor of this Movement (*Jumma Khutba*, October 11, 1940).

And:

No doubt you must expand, organize and strengthen the *Jamaat*, but for God's sake don't make organization an object or worship. If instead of relying on God you place your reliance on the *Jamaat* and its strength, then you can never succeed in spreading the name of God. Rectify the weaknesses of the *Jamaat*, but let not that task hinder the work of propagation (*Jumma Khutba*, April 5, 1940).

### Conclusion

Maulana Muhammad Ali has provided, in very clear terms, the purpose for the existence of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, its primary objectives and the means required to achieve it. As he explains, the task entrusted to the Lahore *Jamaat* is of such great importance, it is the very task that has been entrusted to the righteous prophets of God in the past. Thus, the small numbers of persons in this *Jamaat*, compared to other Muslim groups, is insignificant; the fact that this *Jamaat* is much larger in numbers and has much more resources at its disposal (*masha Allah*) than the individual prophets who were sent to fulfill the very same mission is only of any importance. The day that we strive for the delivering of God's message in a manner that is consistent with the loyalty, devotion and sacrifices exhibited by the holy personages of the past, is the day success will be at hand for this *Jamaat*. As a source of encouragement for every Ahmadi, Maulana Muhammad Ali relates:

Some people tell me that this *Jamaat* is small and will not survive after me. I consider myself powerless and unworthy of being accorded such a status, as God knows best. The desire repeatedly comes in my heart that people who are more worthy should arise from the *Jamaat* and bear this responsibility. Along with that, I also

firmly believe that, no matter what happens, if there is even one person in this *Jamaat* who truly loves God and has an overpowering urge to propagate the name of God then this *Jamaat* will remain alive. ■

### Compiler's Notes

1. Another prophetic incident relating to the "split" in the Ahmadiyya Movement is a well-known vision of Hazrat Mirza (recorded in *Izala Auham*) in which he finds himself standing in front of a house that has a person sitting on the bottom level and another person sitting at the top. He called out to both: "I need an army of one-hundred thousand". The person sitting on the bottom level remained silent whereas the person sitting on the top replied: "I cannot provide one-hundred thousand, but five-thousand can be supplied". By Hazrat Mirza making such an appeal, and by the fact that both persons were from the same "house", indicates that both were followers of Hazrat Mirza. Furthermore, the responses by both clearly evidence two distinct "types" of followers: one that is part of a larger group but cannot provide the services Hazrat Mirza requires and the other that is part of a smaller group and is willing to strive to achieve Hazrat Mirza's mission. This vision clearly foretells a division, based on two apparent objectives, within Hazrat Mirza's community of followers. Similarly, it is recorded in the Quran (3:52) that Hazrat Isa (the first Messiah) also called out to his people: "Who will be my helpers in Allah's way?" The Quran states that "his disciples," or literally the "pure ones," responded to his call and replied "We will be your helpers." If there is a resemblance between the two calls for assistance made by the first and second Messiah, it, accordingly, follows that the group of followers of Hazrat Mirza responding to his call are also the "pure ones", as in the case of those responding to Hazrat Isa's appeal. The answer to the question of who this pure party among Hazrat Mirza's followers is appears to be found in the revelation Hazrat Mirza received: "My pure followers are in Lahore".
2. Relating back to Hazrat Mirza's vision mentioned in note #1, the fact that the one person in the house was sitting on the ground floor and the other on the top near the sky, appears to also be of significance. It seems that the positioning of the two persons imply that the follower on the top and his group will not enjoy the comforts and protections that the other group of followers will maintain. The follower on the top and his group, by remaining steadfast to the true objectives of Hazrat Mirza's mission, will be "exposed" to many difficulties, hardships and trials, similar to a person who remains at the top level of a structure when severe weather conditions strike and unlike the persons who run for safety to the more secure bottom level. Thus, the difficultness of the task of furthering Hazrat Mirza's mission to propagate Islam to the world appears to be indicated in this vision as well.

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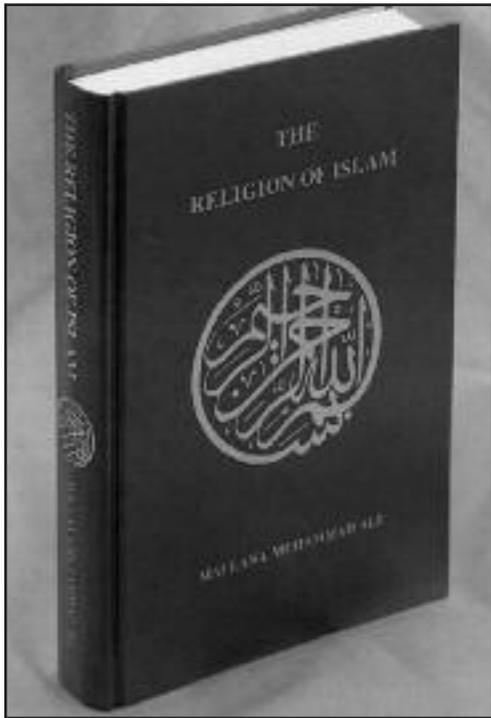
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