



VERDICT OF HISTORY

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Introduction

Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam is now about a century old and a century is long enough for History to record its verdict on the achievements or failings of a movement.

The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, Ḥadrāt Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad of Qādiān, a staunch believer in the superiority of Islam over other creeds, meant to revolutionise the Islamic world by and through Ahmadiyya movement and thus paved way for the re-emergence of not only Muslim world but also of all other Afro-Asian nations. If he was not born, or in other words, if Ahmadiyya Movement was not there, the process of liberation of Asia and Africa from colonial yoke would have been lamentably slow and the geo-political map of the world would have been much different than as we see it today.

In order to ascertain impact of a revolutionary movement it is necessary to look through the conditions obtainable immediately before or prevalent at the time when that movement was founded. A revolutionary mind reacts and starts his struggle for changing these obtainable conditions for the betterment. Thus a study of the background, in which a movement is founded, is a mirror wherein the impact made by this movement on the history of a nation or mankind as a whole is visible. Ahmadiyyat being essentially and basically a religious movement, a study of historical background with special reference to religion in which Ḥadrāt Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad founded his movement is warranted.

Historical background

Glancing through the history of Europe we find that Industrial Revolution and French Revolution changed the fate of European nations which later emerged as colonial powers of Europe. The French revolution broke out in 1789 and as a result of this Revolution administrative reorganisation was brought in the affairs of the state which set pattern for the rest of the Europe to follow in the coming years.

One of the most important changes was the introduction of a constitutional provision about the Church and its functionaries, which is known as *Civil Constitution of Clergy*. As a result of this constitutional arrangement all the property of the Church was nationalised and control of Pope over the Church was finished. The Church was thus virtually turned into one of the Departments of the Government. All the persons concerned with the administration of the Church were declared as Government employees and their salaries were to be fixed and paid by the Government. According to a Decree passed in December, 1790 all the Bishops, Priests and all other ecclesiastical functionaries were required to take an oath of allegiance to the *Civil Constitution of Clergy*.

England is one country which had been fighting against France as a result of rivalry for supremacy in Europe and at Seas. It had nationalised Church much earlier than the French Revolution. During the reign of Henry VIII, complete severance of relationship with Pope had taken place and the Church of England was

founded. The King, under the constitution of England, is the head of this Church and he, in exercise of these powers, signs and decrees the appointment of Archbishop of Canterbury who is the chief functionary of the Church of England. Thus it is evident that the state control of the Church, which was achieved in the rest of the Europe after the French Revolution, had in fact been introduced in England much earlier during the reign of Henry VIII.

After the French Revolution and the war between France and Austria in 1792, Napoleon came to power in France. During Napoleon's times an agreement commonly known as *Concordat* was signed in 1802. The main provisions of this agreement were :

1. Religious freedom was to be guaranteed to all provided it did not endanger public order.
2. The Roman Catholic faith was to be recognised as the religion of the majority of the Frenchmen but other faiths were also to be given equal rights and privileges. No restrictions were to be imposed upon conversions and citizens were allowed to join any Church or creed they desired.
3. The French government was to retain its control over the appointments of Church officials. It was also to be responsible for the payment of their salaries etc. All existing bishops and other officials were to submit their resignations and French government was to make fresh appointments. After that they were to be communicated to Pope who could disagree with any appointment but he had to communicate to French government his reasons for such a disagreement. The French govern-

ment however, reserved the right to disagree with the objections raised by Pope and in such a case the decision of the Government was to stand as final.

As is evident from the above clauses, in spite of this agreement, the Church remained virtually a department of the State.

Since almost whole of Europe lay at the feet of Napoleon, so wherever he went these reforms were introduced and a few countries are retaining this, or other constitutional provisions of the like nature, even up till this date — for example Belgium.

The principle that religion is a private matter for each individual and only incidentally a concern of the State, which later on was termed as Secularism, was also evoked by Napoleon in Europe. Previously there had always been, in nearly every European country, some sort of enforced union between the Church and the State and the Church had usually shared with the State important functions of Government such as conduct of Schools, administration of Justice, power of taxation etc. Napoleon deprived the Church of all these rights and brought it under the complete control of the State.

Concordat lasted for a very long time in France and was abolished only in 1905 during the time of the Third Republic when the law of separation of Church and the State was passed on December 9, 1905.

Emergence of Colonial Powers

Napoleon was master of Europe till 1815 when he was defeated by the British. Period of 1815 to 1854 was of comparative peace in Europe. It was during this

period that, as a result of industrial revolution and superior know-how, some of the European nations started the process of subjugation of Asian and African countries. England and France emerged as colonial powers. Conquest of India had almost been completed by the British during this period.

There were some wars during the period 1854-71. Crimean War of 1854-56 was imposed on Ottoman Turkey by Russia under the pretext of the protection of Holy places in Ottoman Empire. After 1856 Russia turned to the conquest of Asian territories on and along its borders. In 1859 Russian armies occupied Eastern Caucasus. In 1854 Turkistan and Chinkent were captured by Russian armies. Tashkent was occupied in 1865. After this Amir of Bokhara was defeated and his territories were occupied. Bokhara and Samarkand were occupied in the year 1861. In 1873, Kira, the last independent Khanate was also subjugated. After this the Russian army advanced towards Hirat and Afghanistan, which ultimately brought in Britain — another European colonial power. British Government felt that if Afghanistan was occupied by Russian armies then a direct threat will be posed to one of its largest and richest colonies in Asia namely India. Britain at that time was considered to be the super power of the world, therefore, the Russian armies halted their march on the borders of Afghanistan on the call of British Government. Thereafter the Russians declared war against Turkey on April 24, 1877. Conflicts between Russia and Turkey continued till the fall of Ottoman Empire as a result of World War I.

In Europe Italy had been unified by 1870 and Italian kingdom came into being in July 1871. Rome became its capital. An important factor was abolition of the temporal power of Pope.

Napoleon III tried to establish an overseas empire for his country. He was able to lay the foundations of a huge colonial realm which was later on to become the pride of the Third Republic. France strengthened its hold upon Algeria, increased her political and economic influence in the Eastern Mediterranean basin, established bases in Senegal and Somaliland. It also began penetration into Indo-China and participated in the opening up of China. Jules Ferry, who is considered to be the most important and influential Prime Minister of the Third Republic in France, was a staunch supporter of the policy of colonial expansion. During his time France established her protectorate over Tunis, occupied French Congo and sent forces to Tonkin and Madagascar. Then Senegal, Guinea, Dohomy, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, the northern part of Congo and Oasis of Sahara were occupied.

Britain had by this time obtained supremacy on Suez and Gibraltar. Sudan had also been occupied. Some other colonies in Africa had been established. India had fallen much earlier. Openings in China were being made and the British empire had already extended to the Far East.

By 1880 the colonial powers of Europe had strengthened their hold militarily on most of their colonies. Physical or armed effort for throwing out the foreign rulers from India had failed in 1857. In Sudan Mehdi Sudani raised arms for liberation of his country in 1880. This too failed to achieve its objectives. Prior to it,

similar efforts had already failed in Egypt. The failure of all these efforts at arms had resulted into increasing manifold miseries of the people of occupied territories. No doubt, all these efforts were most heroic, but later reprisals by the occupant powers found the people in these countries in miserable conditions.

After complete subjugation of the people of occupied territories the time had come for the colonial powers to reap the fruits of their conquests. The armies had gone back to their barracks and it was time for other departments to play their role for ensuring full benefits of the conquest and for laying strong foundations for the colonial rule. It was here that amongst other departments services of the Church were marshalled in this direction.

Church in the field

Human history bears conclusive evidence to the fact that the religion and religion alone is that inspiring force which draws human beings to an objective higher than the considerations of colour, race and nationalism. It knits them in an international brotherhood in such a manner that its members sacrifice all their geographical, racial, linguistic and national creeds at the altar of the religious unity. For example people of European governments and kingdoms, in spite of their internal rivalries had fought as one army during Crusades in Palestine. Not only traditional enemies became allies during this period but they accepted to fight under the command of their otherwise arch enemy, simply for the sake of and due to the call of religion.

Similarly whenever a Muslim government or country fell, Muslims all over the world felt the pinch of it.

Most recent example is that of Jews. Hearts of the Jews all over the world whether in Asia, Africa, Europe or America throb in unison with the Jewish government and people of Israel.

In fact the impulse of religion is so strong that the idea of one world government, if ever it materialised, will be only through the domination of the world by one of the great religions. Although Communist thinkers had been claiming that Communism is international in its spirit but the events of the last decade or two have belied this claim. Communism has miserably failed in its claim to internationalism as almost all the Communist states have been relegated to their national amelioration and a race for achieving and reserving all benefits for their own nationals as against other people is going on.

As stated above, religion alone is the force which knits human relationship above racial, colour, linguistic and national considerations. This aspect of the human history was fully clear to the thinkers and politicians of Europe. They had a successful experience of this inspiring potential of the religion during crusades against Salahuddin of Palestine. They were aware that all other considerations become subservient to religious unity. It was for this reason that, after establishing colonies in Asia and Africa, they felt the need of converting the people of these colonies to their own faith — Christianity. This sentimental unity alone could guarantee the requisite base for perpetual rule of the colonial powers on

the people of their colonies. In order to achieve this objective the colonial powers used the services of their Church department. It has already been shown in the foregoing pages that Church was one of the departments of the Governments of Europe working under the supervision and control of the respective government like all other government departments. Under this plan Priests and Bishops by the thousands arrived in the occupied countries on a mission of conversion of local population to the faith of Rulers. One after the other thousands of Churches were built to house these Christian missionaries who started their operation with the aid of and in coordination with the civil administration set up by the rulers to administer the local affairs of the Government.

Simultaneously these countries were flooded with literature on Christianity. Strangely enough during this period lots of literature originating from European Christian thinkers, educationists, historians and priests contained highly slanderous material against Islam. All sorts of insinuations were hurled against the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. Not that these people did not have the sources of obtaining true and correct knowledge about the teachings of Islam or even about the person and life of the Holy Prophet, but all this was being done purposely. There were other religions too in Asia and Africa but this attack was directed only against Islam and its Founder. The reasons why Islam was purposely chosen to be made a target were both religious as well as political. Religious, because Islam was the latest in time even compared

to Christianity and had in the past demonstrated its spiritual force and appeal by attracting the majority population of many a countries in Asia and Africa. Political, because a large number of the countries of Asia and Africa occupied by the colonial powers of Europe were previously under the rule of Muslim governments and had a predominant Muslim population. This population was to be converted to Christianity in order to achieve the objective of establishing a perpetual colonial rule, hence this literature for creating hatred against Islam and the Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. This plan had started working well and had in fact claimed thousands of persons in each country. The achievements of Christian missionaries had stunned the local Muslim population. They were already in a state of complete ruination both economically as well as politically and they felt quite helpless against the propaganda of Christian missionaries and were living under great frustration and humiliation.

Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad and his Contribution

It was against this background that Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad was born in the year 1835. During his early age he had seen Muslim States falling to the colonial powers one after the other. In the year 1857 he was about 22 years old and had witnessed the armed uprising by Indians against the British Rule. He was feeling miserable like all other Muslims. His immense love for Islam and the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, made him weep during the night and pray to Almighty Allah for re-emergence of Islam. He had witnessed the fate of armed conflicts

with the colonial Rulers and understood fully well that now conditions were not conducive for such an effort. The enemy had changed his tactics and had chosen a different battlefield. It was directed towards conquering the minds of the people. Insinuation, slander, hatred, distortion etc. were his weapons. No organized resistance worth of name was being offered from any Muslim quarters. Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad took stock of the situation and joined the battle.

Another crusade started, but this time the odds were much heavier than the previous one. Previously it was simply a matter of occupying a piece of land but now it was a challenge direct to the faith, to Islam itself. He took this challenge single handedly. One man stood against the whole of Christian world — against all the colonial powers — and around 1880 proclaimed in one of his earliest book, *Fatḥ Islām*, “I have been raised to shatter the image of *Farangī*”. Again in his epoch-making book on comparative study of religions, viz. *Barānīn-i-Aḥmadiyyah*, he advanced strong irrebuttable arguments in favour of Islamic teachings comparing it with the teachings of Christianity and other religions. And then in his book, *Taryāq al-Qulūb*, he emphasised the need of countering the salanderous attacks on Islam in these words :

“Every sensible and judicious person can easily follow this simple point that Reformer (*Mujaddid*) is raised to fight against and destroy the most dangerous evils prevalent in his time. In this troubled age when people all around are falling prey to the poisonous teachings of Christianity, the greatest work of the *Mujaddid* should

be to save the future generations of the Muslims from the effects of the poisonous propaganda of Christianity and to establish beyond doubt the superiority of Islam. This being the duty of the *Mujaddid* of this age, he has been named in the heavens as 'Crumbler of the Cross'."

Here was one man waging his war all alone. In spite of heavy odds he continued fighting. Only God was with him. Then a few persons, who understood his call and the importance of his mission, gathered around him. Slowly the number increased to a few thousands, and he founded a Jamā'at.

It is most unfortunate that while he was engaged in a crusade for saving the future generations of the Muslims from the offensive of Christianity he did not receive any assistance from the Ulema of that time. But on the contrary, we find that some of the Ulema went even to the extent of joining hands with Christians as against him. Unmindful of all these he continued to make his historic contribution till his death. He inflicted defeat after defeat on his Christian adversaries. Day in and day out he was busy delivering lectures, conducting debates and publishing books and literature wherein he portrayed and exposed hidden as well as manifest beauties of the teachings of Islam and the Qur'an. His major ambition in life was to blow to pieces the myth of Christianity and establish superiority of Islamic teachings over all other religions.

His efforts were ultimately rewarded by the Almighty. The Christian missionaries lost grounds. In him they found an adversary who not only rebutted all their

baseless charges against Islam and its Founder but adversely launched severe attacks on the fallacious teachings of the Church. The onslaught of the cross had failed. No Christian missionary or priest dared answer his challenge. So much so that by 1894 the future of the coming generations of the Muslims had been fully secured. By this time breaches in the enemy defence were visible. Lord Bishop of Gloucester, John Ely Coat, in his presidential address to the Missionary Conference of 1894, admitted that a new style of Islam was confronting them in British India. It was strongly opposed to all those bad things in Islam on account whereof religion of Muḥammad (peace be upon him) seemed hateful to them. As a result Prophet Muḥammad was once again regaining greatness and glory. These new developments could be re-organised easily. That new Islam was not defensive in temperament but on the contrary had attained an offensive position and that the most unfortunate factor was that some of their European people were now inclined towards it.

By his scholarly writings and strong arguments, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad had seen the inherent weaknesses in the teachings of the Christian Church. He was the first person in centuries who proved beyond doubt the superiority of Islam through a comparative study of the great religions of the world. No parallel is to be found in the history of about four centuries in this respect. No faith, no sect in any faith can point out a person of his calibre who had so completely established the truth of his religion by thoroughly mastering the teachings of his own religion as well as

that of other great religions of the world. He was the first Muslim who had shown the beauties of Islam to the West and as a result of his efforts, Islam which was target of severe attacks, which was painted as a religion of brutality and immorality, came to be regarded as a great religion of the world and great European scholars and intellectuals like Bernard Shaw admitted that Islam is the future religion of the world. Who was responsible for this change? Who worked for it? Is there anyone except Ḥadrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Ṣāhib who can claim the credit of this change? Can any one name some other person or organization who accomplished this feat? His services in this behalf were fully recognised and acknowledged by his contemporaries in India.

It is an undeniable fact of history that it was Ḥadrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad alone, who had fought the battle with the Church and had ultimately inflicted defeat upon it.

Majlis-e-Ahrār was an organisation which was strongly opposed to Ḥadrat Mirzā Ṣāhib. In spite of this opposition Chaudhry Afzal Haque, President, *Jamiat-al-Ahrār* paid tributes to Mirzā Ṣāhib at page 46 of his book, *Fitna-e-Irtadād Aur Political Qalābāzīān*, in unequivocal terms which reads as under :

“Before the formation of Ārya Samāj Islam was a lifeless body devoid of any missionary spirit. Swāmi Dayānand’s misconceptions about Islam had awakened the Muslims for a while, but thereafter they went into slumber again as usual. No organisation for missionary purposes could emerge from other sects but only one

person's heart felt the pain of the indifference of the Muslims and he rose, gathered a small group around him and set out for the propagation of Islam. Though Mirzā Ghulām Ahmad could not keep himself above sectarianism, however, he infused that missionary zeal in his followers which is worth following not only by other sects of Islam but serves as an example by itself to all other organisations”.

At his death rich tributes were paid to him by friends and foes alike. In all these comments, editorials and articles his services in the propagation of Islam and defeating the Christian Church found special mention. We quote hereunder from a few of these editorials and articles originating from papers and persons who were not his followers or else were against him during his lifetime.

In an editorial, the Editor of Newspaper, *Sādiqal Akhbār*, Rewarī, India commented :

“Mirzā Ṣāhib by his strongly persuasive speeches and magnificent writings set at rest for ever, the baseless charges of the opponents of Islam by providing irrefutable answers, and proved that truth always prevails. In fact Mirzā Ṣāhib has rendered most valuable service to the faith of Islam, by discharging to the best of his ability, the duty of defending Islam, therefore, justice demands that we should mourn the untimely death of such a strong willed servant of Islam, helper of Muslims, a great scholar like of which is not to be found again”.

Aligarh Institute Gazette wrote : “Indeed he was a great Stalwart of Islam.”

Mirzā Hairat Dehlvi, Editor, *Curzon Gazette*, Dehli, who was an opponent of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, wrote :

“The services which late Mirzā Ṣāḥib rendered to Islam as against Āryas and Christians are worthy of great praise. He changed the complex of religious debates and laid the foundations of a modern literature on religion in India. Being not only a Muslim but a research scholar I admit that even the greatest of Aryās or the greatest of Christian priests dared not open his mouth as against him. I have not seen till this date an answer or reply to the exemplary books written by him against Aryās or Christianity and the irrebuttable answers provided by him to the objections of opponents of Islam.”

Maulānā ‘Abdullāh Al-Ammādī, Editor, *Vakīl*, Amritsar, contributed an article under the caption, “Death of a Scholar”, wherein amongst other tributes he wrote :

“Death of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Ṣāḥib of Qādiān is not such a matter that we do not learn a lesson from it and sit aside with patience leaving it to the pages of history for forgetting it. Such people who create a revolution in intellectual and religious circles are not often born. A few sons, who are the pride of the human history, are born and when they appear they accomplish a revolution.

“In spite of differences with a few of his claims and beliefs the death of Mirzā Ṣāḥib has made the educated intelligentsia of Muslims feel that one of their great men has passed away and with him that glorious chapter of defending the faith of Islam, which was symbolised with his person, has come to an end. His great quality that he had been discharging the duty of a victorious General

against the opponents of Islam compels us to admit that that great movement which rendered our enemies helpless and in-effective should continue, if bad luck does not befall us, from a united platform with a sense of collective responsibility based on the principles of Islam.

Mirzā Şāhib appeared in the vaneguard of that body of lovers of faith who offered this sacrifice for the sake of Islam. They, from birth till death, in thick and thin, sacrificed all that they had at the altar of faithfulness and call of their beloved God."

It is abundently evident from the above that Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Şāhib was considered by his contemporaries as a great Stalwart of Islam who had taken teeth out of the offensive launched by the Christian Church against Islam. Not only that he had saved the future generations of the Muslims from the poisonous propaganda of the Christian missionaries but he launched an offensive against Church and carried the battle to their homelands as was admitted by the Archbishop of Glocesstor in his speech quoted earlier. He had thus put the enemy on the run and had thwarted the plan of European colonial powers for conversion of the people of occupied lands to Christianity to achieve much needed unity of thought for attaining a perpetual colonial rule. He had thus secured the future of the people of Asia and Africa. This crusade was continued by his followers after his death and during the last three decades Africa became the battlefield. It is again an undeniable fact that for a long time only Ahmadi Missionaries were confronting the Christian efforts at conversions in Africa. The much larger number

of people in Africa embracing Islam as against those claimed by Christianity speaks volumes of truth about the success achieved by the followers of Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad. Now when even Islamic States have entered this arena, can they or for that reason any other Jamā'at or aganisation claim even one tenth of this number ?

The Church had been routed only by Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad and his followers and as a result it lost its sting. The contradictions in the teachings of Christianity were so ably portrayed and manifestly exposed by Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Sāhib that when these became known to the very followers of the Church in Europe and America they stopped taking teachings of Christianity seriously. A large number of people in these countries have now completely abandoned religion.

Co nclusion

The background and the historic role played by Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad having been explained, we are now in a position to take stock of the foregoing studies and draw proper and correct conclusions therefrom. It is evident from history that the philosophy of the statesmen and thinkers of the European colonial powers for achieving a sentimental unity with the subjugated people of the colonies through their conversion to the faith of Rulers, was not baseless or wrong. If we glance through the recent history of Asia and Africa with special reference to the liberation movements in various countries of those regions, we find conclusive evidence to the effect that Church or its followers in those countries did not take any part in these efforts

for the liberation from colonial yoke. On the contrary we find that, very often, the Church in China, India, Indo-China and also in Africa was on the side of the colonial governments. After all why did the Church and its followers behave in this manner? Why were they found on the side of the colonial forces? The answer is not difficult to find. The forces of Church were inducted in these areas by the colonial powers for achieving the specific objective of converting the majority of local population to the religion of the colonial Rulers and thus to provide a base of sentimental unity for granting perpetuity to the colonial rule. If the Church had sided with the revolutionary forces fighting for the liberation, it will not only be illogical but will amount to defeating the very objective for which it was inducted into the field.

Had the Church been able to achieve its objectives or had it not been defeated at the hands of Mirzā Şāhib at the early stages of its induction in the colonies the fate and future of Asia and Africa would have been much different than what it is now. By inflicting defeats upon Church and by thwarting the efforts of colonial powers of Europe at conversion of the population of colonies to Christianity, Haḍrat Mirzā Şāhib played a historic role. He not only secured the future of the Muslims but also that of the people of Asia and Africa. Thus he paved way for the future revolutionary forces of Asia and Africa to play their destined role.

Let the people of Asia and Africa recognise their great savior.