

THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT

ASSESSMENT AS A FORCE FOR ISLAMIC REVIVAL

May 26 is sacred to the memory of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, the much maligned Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian. On this day was rung down the curtain of death on this earthly span of his life and along with it on the wide-spread stir and commotion in the domain of religion of which he was the nerve-centre for over a quarter of a century. It is but meet that we should take this opportunity to say a word as to his mission and the unfairness with which the Musalman has, as a rule, treated that mission.

In judging Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, these are the questions that generally arise in the minds of the Musalmans. What has he done, they ask, to advance the cause of Islam and the Musalmans? The Musalmans are still a slave people that they used to be. They are still backward in the race of life. What is the good of a Messiah who did not raise a little finger against the foreign power which holds the Musalmans in subjection? On the other hand he preached loyalty to foreign rule! He has added one more sect to an already sect-ridden Islam. And above all, look at the unseemly mud-throwing of the two sections of his own movement, Qadian and Lahore. Is this the purification that the Messiah has brought about in the ranks of his disciples?

These are pertinent questions to ask and the Ahmadiyya movement must explain its position with regard to these if it is to play a more effective role in the drama of Muslim revival that is just now going on before our eyes. That this movement is a positive force is admitted

by friend as well as foe. It will be a pity if on account of misunderstanding or contemporary jealousy, this tremendous force should be lost to this revivalist campaign of Islam. Islam is just now in a deadly grapple with forces that want to submerge it. The crying need of the times is the conservation of all its national resources and mobilization of the same to the last ounce for the preservation and ultimate triumph of Islam in this grim struggle. And the Ahmadiyya Movement, being decidedly one of the most potent forces within the house of Islam, Islam can ill-afford in this all-out struggle to let this force fritter away for any reason, whether for the fanatical attitude of the mulla-minded sections of Islam or for some follies of the Ahmadiyya Movement itself.

We would take the last point first and examine the mote in our own eye before pointing to the beam in that of our brother. We think the Ahmadiyya Movement should have resisted the tendency to isolationism that it has developed. As a revivalist force its proper place is in the thick of the life of Islam. The isolationism may not have been of its own seeking. It may in the beginning have been forced on it by fanatical elements in the Muslim body-politic. With all that it should have withstood the persecution which, after all, is the price that every reformist movement has to pay for its convictions. The opposition to this movement originated with the mullas who were the diseased limbs of the Muslim society and have since been almost amputated. The other elements that interested themselves in this game were the professional leaders and gutter journalists with whom vilification of this movement was the cheapest way to popularity. Sober sections of society have never been slow to own the services and the solid contribution that this movement has been making towards the advancement of Islam. So far as ideology is concerned, the enlightened sections of Muslims would have long since been swept off their feet by forces of westernism, were it not for the stand that this movement made for Islam

in these tempestuous times. This is the opinion of an independent observer, a Dutch missionary whom the Government of the Netherlands deputed for the express purpose to make a survey of thought in the Islamic world. According to this writer, if the intelligentsia of Muslims are still loyal to Islam it is due to the exposition of Islam as presented by this movement. Now this should have been no small compensation for the mud that ruff-raffs have been throwing at this movement. In all struggles of national regeneration it is the intelligentsia that counts. The priests and professionals who are the parasites of society and thrive on pandering to its baser passions have always stood against reform movements. The Ataturk had to send the Hudjas, the Turkish mullas to the gallows by the score before he could have a free hand to carry out his programme of national reconstruction. That has been the story with every movement that has stood for the true advancement of society. Under our own eyes the Muslim League which under the inspiring, and shall we say, almost inspired lead of the Qaid-i-Azam has become a real force for the revival of Islam finds itself up against these very forces of re-action in the Mullas, the professional leaders, the pseudo-patriots, vested interests and a host of other self-seekers. The Qaid-i-Azam will find it a regular job to clean the Augean stables of Muslim society and he left this Province in utter disgust at the very low standard of public morality. The Ahmadiyya Movement could not expect to be an exception to this rule and we believe it was a blunder on its part, a partial surrender of its great mission, to have receded from the current of Muslim life. The Qadian section's reaction took it to the extreme of setting up a rival camp to Islam, almost a separate religion. The Lahore section has been able to keep its head cool and made it abundantly clear that its highest pride lies in being the humble servant of Islam, the Founder being just one of the numerous spiritual savants of whom Islam has had hundreds and thousands and but for

whose living driving faith Islam would be a dead religion. Thus far, that is in matter of ideology, the Lahore school has struck the golden mean and is therefore acceptable to the generality of Musalmans who see in its views of Islam and its aspirations as to the future of Islam, an echo of their own inner soul. The Lahore Ahmadiya Movement which represents the core of Islam, so far as its teaching goes and the heart of Islam, so far as devotion is concerned, should be the flag-bearer of this onward march of the *millet*. Sane and sober sections are certainly alive to the worth of this movement and the possibilities inherent in it. That should be enough as an incentive to greater and greater collaboration with the other forces of national reconstruction.

Acclaimed as Hero of Islam

To come to the other side of the picture, opposition to the Ahmadiyya Movement falls under two heads—on religious grounds and on political grounds. The religious aspect again resolves itself into three categories—the institution of Mujaddidship, the second advent of Messiah, the fact of Divine revelation. As regards the first, the movement had a perfect plain sailing so long as the Founder's claim was confined to Mujaddidship. By common consent he was acclaimed as the greatest hero of Islam, not simply by virtue of his unrivalled insight into the beauties of Islam but as a living example at the same time of the teachings of Islam. In other words his fame spread far and wide not only as a man who had vanquished all the foes of Islam in the field of argument but also as a Godly man who had contact with God, whose prayers were heard, who was intoxicated with the love of God and the Prophet and whose human sympathies and veracity of character were of a very high order. To properly appraise this reputation, it must be viewed against the background of the times. What was that background? Islam in the hands of the Mullahs

had been reduced to a lifeless body. Aggressive Christianity, militant Aryaism and a host of other new-fangled creeds such as westernism, agnosticism, were, like so many vultures, hovering over it and pouncing upon it right and left. The Prophet of Islam whose memory is dearer to a Musalman than life itself was depicted in most horrid colours. The tongue of calumny was wagged against his holy person without let or hindrance. The Mullas to whom all argument in religion had been taboo found themselves no match for these new foes who attacked Islam with the weapon of argument. Islam had actually been pushed to the wall. There no doubt was a feeble attempt at Aligarh in defence of Islam but that was at best an apologia for Islam, aiming at bringing Islam in line with the so-called modern scientific concepts. It was on a scene such as this that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad made his debut as a champion of Islam. This was the turning of Islam at bay, as it were. He confronted all these enemies at the same time, gave them battle after battle on their own ground and gave each one such a thrashing that his very name became a dread to the enemy. Henceforward the Christian missionary or the Arya preacher, so far militant and aggressive in his attitude against Islam, came to consider discretion the better part of valour. The first question he would now put to his Muslim opponent at a religious debate would be whether the latter was an Ahmadi and if the reply was in the affirmative he would pack up his books and bolt off.

This was no small achievement. Defeatist Islam was converted into a triumphant Islam. It is ingratitude to forget this great debt that Musalmans owe to the Ahmadiyya Movement. It is easy enough to indulge in cheap jibes at this movement and belittle at this distance of time its role in the revival of Islam. But those who know anything of this background are compelled to take their hats off to this movement for championing the cause of Islam at a time when the enemy had taken it almost for

dead. Even a prominent leader of the Ahrar movement, (the foremost in its hostility to the Ahmadiyya movement), the late Ch. Afzal Haq could not but bow his head to the Founder of this movement on this account. Bewailing the general apathy of the Musalmans towards their religion in his book "The Danger of Apostacy" he writes :

" Before the rise of the Arya Samaj Islam was like a lifeless corpse. It had no urge of *tabligh* left in it. Swami Dayanand's propaganda against Islam startled the Musalmans for a while but as usual they went to sleep again. Among other sects of Islam no organization could be set up for purposes of *tabligh*. *There was one heart that was stung to the quick at the arathy of the Musalmans. Rallying a band of workers around him he advanced for the propagation of Islam. Although Mirza Ghulam Ahmad could not rise above sectarianism, nevertheless he kindled in the hearts of his associates a passion for the propagation of Islam which should serve as an example not only to the various sects of Islam but also to all the missionary organizations of the world.*"

The Ahrar hostility, as we will have the occasion to show later on, was due solely to political reasons. On religious plain this frank admission from the pen of a well-known Ahrar thinker is the greatest homage that could be paid to the deep Islamic fervour of the Founder of this movement. He was the sole hero, as it were, who, while Islam was set upon by foes on all sides, rose like a warrior, equipped with deadly weapons, delivered such bitter attacks on the enemies that soon they were routed and Islam marched victorious and triumphant. The *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, commenting on the death of the Founder said :

" Undoubtedly the deceased was a great warrior of Islam."

The Turning Point

The general body of Musalmans applauded the Founder as the champion of Islam. Maulana Mohd. Husain who was later to lead the van of opposition against him described his voluminous vindication of Islam, the *Barāhin-i-Ahmadiya*, as the greatest work on Islam the like of which could not be found during the last thirteen centuries. His personal character, his piety, his love of and devotion to Islam was vouched for by one and all. It was after attaining to this apex of personal glory that came the turning point. So far the Founder, in common with the rest of the Musalmans, believed that Jesus Christ was alive in heaven and would come down some day to become the deliverer of Islam. It dawned on the Founder that the idea ran counter to the explicit verses of the Quran which made mention of his death in so many words. Besides the appearance of a prophet after the Holy Prophet Muhammad was also against the accepted teaching of the Quran as to the finality of prophet-hood with the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The popular belief that Jesus was alive and would reappear in person was therefore unwarranted. The question was how to reconcile the reports in the Hadith as to the coming of the Messiah with the Quranic view as to the death of Jesus and finality of Prophethood. It was revealed to the Founder that the Messiah foretold in the Hadith was to be none other than the Mujaddid of the 14th century who would be vested, in relation to his special mission to make Islam triumph over Christendom, with the title of the Messiah. There was nothing unusual in this. Such epithets were commonly used. The Prophet once told Hazrat Ali that he stood to him in the same relation as Aron did to Moses. Another Hadith compares the Ulama of the Muslim *millet* to the prophets of the Israelites. In Sufi terminology we particularly come across the fact that for his resemblance to some former prophet a saint of this *ummat* has been given the epithet of that prophet.

Age-Long Riddle Solved

Now this was like the key-word in a cross-word puzzle which, when supplied, cleared up the whole mystery. All the prophecies that were so far more or less riddles now fitted in so well that the whole thing became quite clear. The Holy Prophet's prophetic vision had penetrated into the mysteries of the future 14 centuries ahead. He had been shown the scene of the domination of the Christian nations over the whole of the world. The Quran describes these nations as Gog Magog; the Hadith as Dajjal. As an anti-dote against the danger of Dajjal (Anti-Christ) the Hadith prescribes recitation of the first and last ten verses of the Quran. These verses speak of the Christian nations and their development of arts and sciences to a very high degree. They have been described as having reached the pinnacle of worldly glory and dominated the entire world. It is at such a time that Islam was destined to challenge this Dajjal and Gog Magog at the height of its temporal power and ultimately to vanquish it with its spiritual power. It was for the Mujaddid of the 14th century to take up this challenge of the west, confront it with the superior spiritual message of Islam and make Islam triumph over it in the long run. It was in relation to this momentous chapter of history which was yet to unfold itself that a clue had been supplied in the Prophet's prophecy as to the advent of a Messiah. The Messiah was to be none other than the Mujaddid, explained the Founder, and it had been revealed to him that he was that man.

Now there was nothing very alarming in this. It solved the whole riddle of the appearance of the Messiah and the Dajjal and so many other prophetic pictures by the Prophet about these times. But every thing new jars upon the mind of man and he is very slow to assimilate things out of the common rut. This caused a storm of opposition against him. The opposition was due to nothing more than the psychological shock that

a novel idea like this was bound to give. The shock is already spent out. The death of Jesus is now a common belief with Muslims, They are no longer looking forward to his appearance. As to Dajjal and Gog Magog these too have become identified in the Muslim's mind with the Christian nations of the world, as expressed by Iqbal in his couplet :

کھل گئے یا جوج اور ما جوج کے لشکر تمام
چشم مسلم دیکھ لے تفسیر حرف ینسلون

The whole picture as presented for the first time by the Founder has now become part and parcel of Muslim mentality. The only hurdle that is still there before them, strangely enough, is that part of the picture which relates to the triumph of Islam over the forces of Dajjal with the Muslim Messiah, the Mujaddid of the 14th century as the flag-bearer of this spiritual expedition, the final overthrow of Dajjal and the ultimate triumph of Islam.

After seeing how Christianity has ceased to be a force as a religion, after seeing how the entire angle of vision of the west on Islam has undergone a revolution, thanks to the impact of the Ahmadiyya Movement with it, after seeing how the message of Islam has been carried to the very heart of Christendom and won a place in that heart—after seeing all this it will be simply shutting eyes against the fact that the man who is responsible for all this revolution cannot but be the Muslim Messiah that was foretold by the Prophet to establish the ascendancy of Islam over the tremendous and dangerous forces described as Gog Magog in the Quran and as Dajjal in the Hadith.

Revelation

The fact of revelation proved another pill that the Musalman of half a century ago could not manage to swallow. Here again the fault lay with his own preconceived notions. The Quran explicitly says that God reveals.

His will to man in words. The man to whom revelation is vouchsafed does not become a prophet thereby. The Hadith is still more explicit. "Among my *ummat*", the Prophet is reported to have said "there shall be men to whom God shall speak without their being prophets." The Founder no doubt claimed that God spoke to him but he made it perfectly clear that it never implied prophethood which had come to a close with the Holy Prophet Muhammad. "Accursed is the man", he proclaimed, "who lays any claim to prophethood after the Holy Prophet."

This is a perfectly sound position and we see no reason why it should present such an insurmountable difficulty to a Musalman. On the other hand it should be a matter for rejoicing that God is after all not inaccessible, that it is open to every man to seek personal contact with him. Why should the Musalman fight so shy of this idea? If audience with a common king is considered the highest honour that can fall to the lot of man why take fright at the idea of audience with the King of kings, God Himself? The Ahmadiyya Movement restores this lost heritage of Muslims. Be it noted that even Mahatma Gandhi once claimed that God had spoken to him and there was no horror at the idea anywhere. The Founder made a scientific demonstration of this fact by making scores of prophecies which came out true to the letter. After all, with the scientific spirit of the age in which we live, we cannot so lightly dismiss the fact of this spiritual experience. The world has outgrown the age of cock-sure materialism. Science no longer denies spiritual experiences of this kind. Joad, the other day, made a public confession to this effect. The arguments of the heart, he said, are different from the arguments of the head and if the head can't understand the experiences of the heart it is no reason that those experiences do not exist. If a man with no ear for music cannot appreciate the sweet strains of a melody, it does not prove that there is no sweetness in music. The fault lies with the

unattuned ear. The same is true of the spiritual experience known as revelation. The fault lies with our ears and rather than find fault with the Founder of this movement on that score, we should try to cure our spiritual ears.

V Symbol of Islam

So far the religious ground is concerned, the position of the Ahmadiya Movement is not only unassailable, it takes Islam at one big jump from the morass of despondency in which it had got stuck up to the heights of a world destiny but for which the present materialistic civilization is bound to perish. This in a nutshell is the sum and substance of this movement. It is a new vision of the glory of Islam; the V symbol, to borrow a war-time expression, of Islam. The terms and trappings that have come to be associated with it are not the main thing. They are just the slogans of a triumphant Islam. Mujaddid Messiah, Dajjal, Gog Magog—these are the terms in which the prophet's prophetic vision has depicted this latter-day struggle of Islam against the most mighty odds known to history. And terms and slogans, it cannot be gainsaid, have their value in carrying forward big movements. The Pakistan slogan by itself has done more to push forward the cause of our political freedom in this country than all the force of logic that we could possibly muster. The Messiah is just a symbol or a slogan if you would like to call it, chosen through prophetic vision by the Prophet himself for the leadership of Islam in this bigger struggle for world domination as a spiritual, moral and cultural force. It is no use quarrelling over the shell when the kernel, the substance of the movement is all that can be desired—viz., the revival of Islam as a moral and spiritual force, the overthrow of the forces of materialism as represented by westernism and reshaping the world in the light of Islamic values.

Its Political Value

The political side need not detain us long for the simple reason that politics, strictly so-called, was never within the domain of this movement. To turn to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a man of God first and last, for political guidance is like going to a doctor for the construction of a bridge. In matters mundane the Prophet's own dictum must hold good to-day as it did in his own day—*viz.*,

انتم اعلم بامور دنياكم

“In your worldly affairs you know better than I do”. Political deliverance was not the immediate objective before the Founder of this movement. That was a minor issue comparatively and bound to come in the wake of faith which he came to rekindle, just as day follows night. No power on earth can for long hold a truly God-fearing and God-knowing people in subjection. When the mind has been set free, when the mind has been awakened to its high destiny, no shackles can hold the body in subjection for long. In addressing itself to this mental reorientation of the Musalman, this movement has in fact been laying the only foundations on which Pakistan can rest.

The question therefore why the Ahmadiyya Movement did not come to grips with the foreign rule does not arise. It was neither its mission to do so, nor was it competent to do so. Nevertheless challenge to the foreign rule was implied in the challenge of the movement to Western domination as a whole, its method to end that domination being different to that of the politician.

The Founder's loyalty to the Government has been made the occasion for much criticism. This again is a case of misunderstanding. This attitude must be interpreted in the light of the back ground associated with the advent of the Messiah. According to popular notions he was to declare a war against the infidels. When the Founder

proclaimed loyalty all he meant was that he had no designs whatsoever to subvert the Government. His enemies carried all sorts of tales to official ears to injure his mission. It was to counter these that he had, every now and then, to assure the Government, as to his loyalty by which he meant peacefulness of his mission. This had no reference to the freedom movement with which he did not consider himself called upon to dabble. It was simply not in his line.

One other thing must be borne in mind in this connection. The Founder was perhaps the one Muslim of any importance in contemporary public life who never danced attendance on officials, in fact who shunned them, whom no official smiles or frowns could buy or coerce. We have had before us the examples of so-called leaders who move heaven and earth when running down the Government from a public platform and at the same time negotiate with it for proper price. The Founder of this movement wielded a great influence. He was held in highest esteem, even by those opposed to his views, But the Government which spreads its golden tentacles with more or less success over every such figure in public life had not even the courage to make any such advances to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Fear of the Government was equally foreign to his nature. Government then was not the weak-kneed Government of our day. It was a Government of the times when an Indian had not the courage to travel with a white man in the same compartment without running the risk of his spleen being torn within him. It was against the religion of this white man that the Founder raised the standard of open revolt. His God, Jesus, he shouted from house tops, was dead. He himself, a humble servant of the Holy Prophet Muhammad had been put in his seat. Christianity was a false creed, against the reason and nature of man and was bound to give way before Islam. His express mission was to break the cross, the symbol of Christianity. This set the whole hornets' nest of

Christian missionaries against him. These missionaries were very powerful in those days. Even at this hour of the day, under the reformed constitution, the intervention of a Christian missionary on behalf of a Christian lady superintendent secured the dismissal of a minister of state. But the Founder stood dauntless, where his mission was concerned. He issued challenge after challenge to the then Bishop of Lahore to discuss the comparative merits of Islam and Christianity but that great dignitary had not the courage to face this champion of Islam. But not able to measure strength with him the padres began to strike below the belt. They got up a false case of instigation to murder against him, and left no stone unturned to encompass his ruin. In the midst of all this storm that raged around him he stood as firm as a rock. He cared not a hang for the might of the British Raj when it was a question of the honour of Islam.

Can it be said of a man of this high character that he went out of his way to win the favour of the Government? The fact is he had no concern with the Government. Politics was not in his line, And where the interest of Islam as a faith clashed with that of the Government he was dauntless to the extent of provocation.

He was certainly not against the freedom movement. He spoke highly of the swadeshi movement and approved of the efforts of the Congress, then the only active political organization, to win more and more rights for the people. And if he were alive to-day, we dare say he would have have blessed the Pakistan Movement.

Plea For Good Sense

We believe we have disposed of the main misunderstandings or misrepresentations that have been working against this movement. We have done so in the conviction that this movement is the only orthodox brand of Islam and as such a most potent constructive force

for the reconstruction of the house of Islam. We know this movement has since drifted a long way off from its original channels. The Qadian section has almost broken off from the main stream of Islam. This is unfortunate. Then an unseemly strife has been going on between the two sections which has to that extent crippled the movement for useful constructive work, lending a very good excuse thereby to the general body of Musalmans to stand away from this movement.

The Lahore section of the movement has so far struggled to keep the original spirit of the movement intact. That spirit could be summed up in two words—revival of Islam. Solidarity of Islam which is indispensable for any revivalistic movement has been the badge of this section of the movement. These are the main things—the things that matter. The Founder and this movement are means to that end. Let us not lose sight of this perspective. Much confusion has been caused and breath wasted by upsetting this balance, whether through overzeal or folly or mischief.

To our Muslim brethren and Qadiani friends we have to say the same. Any tendency that separates is against the spirit of Islam and of this movement, which is but a hand maid of Islam in these times. That is the surest path to self-stultification. Life means the fusion of variety, even diversity into harmony. In the midst of this seeming diversity, all the elements in Islam, must seek fusion in a common destiny. That alone is the way to national greatness, Islamic revival, Pakistan whatever you may call it. Leave that high road and you step into the wilderness of isolationism which knows no end and which ultimately proves the grave of those who are lost into it.