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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The Name Ahmadiyya AND Its Necessity

by

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Most people are under the wrong impression that the name Ahmadiyya which Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib has given to his followers is after his own name. This is a grave and great misunderstanding. They are unaware of the fact that Hazrat Mirza Sahib has named his Jama'at after the Holy Prophet's name Ahmad and not after his own name. Had he desired to create a new dispensation or had he been one of those hankering after worldly name and fame, he should have welcomed the name "Mirzaees" which his opponents had coined for his followers, because this epithet very well perpetuates the memory of his own name, the Mirza. But his selfless spirit and the unbounded love for his master, the Holy Prophet, were too powerful for Hazrat Mirza Sahib to prefer his own name to that of his beloved Master's.

Let us for a moment look at the state of affairs in the house of Islam. All the various

sects and denominations in this faith have been named after their respective illustrious leaders such as we have the Hanafees, Shafees, Hanbalees and Malkees. Then again the various groups who owe their allegiance to the spiritual mystics go after the names of their respective saints such as Qadriyya, Chishtiyya Naqshbandiyyah, etc. But Hazrat Mirza Sahib stands out unique in this respect. He has named his Jama'at after the name of the Holy Prophet, thereby effacing the memory of his own name and commemorating that of his beloved Master Ahmad. Now this is a point of sharp contrast between the method of naming other sects in Islam and the one adopted by Hazrat Mirza Sahib.

The Indispensable Necessity of Labelling a Movement

The objection is often heard "where does at all lie the necessity of having a name?" A moment's reflection will show that such an objection can only be raised by those who are hollow-minded idealists and are strangers to the realities of life. Common-sense bears it

out that the moment a thing or a person or a community comes into existence in this world, it must be given a name in order to distinguish it from others. There never was born a person who had no name unless he died with his birth. The same is true in respect of communities. Whenever there comes into being a community with distinctive characteristics of its own, a name must be given to it and if it will not call itself by a name, people must out of sheer necessity give it one. Such has actually been the case. Persons of the way of thinking of Sir Sayyad Ahmad although not actually forming themselves into a community, were yet given the name of 'Naturees'. The followers of Abdul Wahhab of Najd at first did not name themselves and were called "Wahhabees" by others. It was after some time that they thought it advisable to give themselves a suitable name, the Ahl-i-Hadeeth or the followers of the Holy Prophet's traditions, a name which describes their characteristics very aptly. Maulvi Abdullah of Chakrala had peculiar notions of his own and people who accepted his views were given the

name of "Chakralvees". It was after sometime had passed that they thought it better to label themselves by a suitable name rather than be left at the mercy of the masses to be nicknamed and thereupon they chose for themselves firstly the name of Ahl-i-Quran, then Ahl-i-Zikr and finally Ummat-i-Muslimah. Now what does all this experience and experiment go to show? It simply endorses the common-sense view-point. A community or a group of persons who stand united in respect of a particular view-point or who represent a peculiar school of thought in respect of certain principles or who stand to espouse even a general cause must bear a name in order to distinguish themselves from others. If the people forming the group for a specific purpose will not choose to label themselves, others are bound to give them a name for the sake of distinction. There is no way out of it. In the case of the followers of Hazrat Mirza Sahib people had already named them "Mirzaees". Just consider what would have happened had Hazrat Mirza Sahib not chosen an appropriate name for his community? The name "Mirzaees" would have

come to be a recognised one for them and in such a case the self-same critics who now object to the name "Ahmadiyya" would have raised a hue and cry saying that Mirza Sahib did not give his followers a name free from sectarianism but left the matter there to let his followers be called after his own name. The truth is that one cannot please everybody in this world and there is no end to excuses and objections where the will to work and sacrifice is lacking.

It is to be remembered that Hazrat Mirza Sahib did not think of naming his followers until a dire necessity arose in 1901. There was to be held a census of the people of this country. In those days in the census returns, there used to be not only a column for one's religion but a column for noting down the denomination of the faith to which a person belonged. One had not only to declare before census authorities the faith to which one belonged but also the school of thought to which he adhered. Upon this Hazrat Mirza Sahib issued a manifesto stating therein that his followers should declare themselves as be-

longing to the Ahmadiyya school of thought in Islam. His exact wordings are :—

“And the name which is appropriate for this community and by which *we ourselves* as well as our Jama‘at would like to be called, is ‘Musalmans of the Ahmadiyya school of thought’.”

Now, this original quotation should serve as an eye-opener for those who prefer the allegation that Hazrat Mirza Sahib has substituted the name Ahmadiyya in place of the name “Muslim” as given by the Quran to its followers. Hazrat Mirza Sahib says that the name which he likes not only for his followers but for himself as well, is “Musalman of the Ahmadiyya school.” Evidently, the name “Ahmadiyya” is not in substitution of the name “Muslim” but is in addition to it, in order to distinguish its members from other schools of thought in Islam. The objection that Mirza Sahib has named his community after his own name falls flat by the statement that Hazrat Mirza Sahib likes himself also to be called an *Ahmadi*. Obviously, the label cannot be after his own name. Had Hazrat Mirza

Sahib omitted to mention the name of the faith, *i.e.*, *Musalman*, there might have been some grounds for the suspicion that he substituted the name *Ahmadiyya* in place of the God-given name 'Muslim'. But in view of the above quotation there remains not the least doubt that the name *Ahmadiyya* has been given by Hazrat Mirza Sahib to his followers not in place of the name 'Muslim' but in addition to it in order to distinguish them from the already-existing numerous schools of thought in Islam. Where lies the sin in this procedure? Why so much fuss over this matter of naming his followers,—an indispensable necessity which could be waived on no account?

The Mirza's Great Love for the Faith of Islam

Not to speak of Hazrat Mirza Sahib substituting other names for *Islam* and *Muslims* or originating another dispensation in place of the faith of Islam as his opponents would have us believe, he vehemently resented his opponents dubbing him a heretic. The reasons which he advanced against his opponents in

order to prove his fidelity to the faith of Islam and which have so often been repeated in his numerous and voluminous writings were to the effect that he professed his faith in the *Kalima*, that he believed in all the commandments and ordinances of the Quran as true and tried to live up to them, that he was an ardent lover and a faithful servant of the Holy Prophet, on whom be peace. It would not be out of place to quote a few of his Persian verses here—

ما مسلمانانیم از فضل خدا مصطفی ما را امام و پیشوا
 هست او خیرالرسول خیرالانام هر نبوت را بروشد اختتام
 اندرین دین آمده از ما دریم هم برین از دارد نیا بگذریم
 آن کتاب حق که قرآن نام اوست باده عرفان ما از جام اوست
 یک قدم دوری ازان روشن کتاب
 نزد ما کفرست و خسراں و تباب

“Of truth we are by the grace of the Lord Muslims, and Mustafa (the Holy Prophet) is truly our leader and guide. The Holy Prophet is the best of the creation and the choicest of the Prophets and with him has terminated every kind of prophethood. We have come into this world from the womb of mother with this faith (Islam) and we would certainly pass

away from it while believing in the same. That book of truth called Quran is the fountain-source of the cup of my knowledge. To swerve one step away from this bright Book is according to me heresy, ruination and utter failure.”

A few Urdu couplets —

ہم تو رکھتے ہیں مسلمانوں کا دین دل سے ہیں خدام ختم المرسلین
 شرک اور بدعت سے ہم بیزار ہیں خاک راہ احمد مختار ہیں
 سارے حکموں پر ہمیں ایمان ہے
 جان و دل اس راہ پر قربان ہے

“Of truth we are believers in the faith of Musalmans,. With all our heart we are the servants of the last of the Prophets. We denounce polytheism and innovation and we are the dust of the path of our Master Ahmad. We have faith in all the ordinances and we are ready to sacrifice our very soul and life in this cause.”

The reader can well realise the deep conviction and the ardent love for the faith of Islam that these lines breathe. Mark the simplicity, the natural outflow and the depth of sincerity that has been expressed in them. Hazrat Mirza

Sahib's numerous statements and voluminous writings evince the same spirit of languishing in the love for the cause of Islam.

Now it should be evident to all impartial and unprejudiced investigators that Hazrat Mirza Sahib has not made any addition to or subtraction from or any other kind of alteration in the faith of Islam. It is the very same faith which was revealed thirteen centuries ago upon which he himself acted and towards which he invited others to act upon. The Ahmadees have the same five daily prayers, the same thirty days fasts of the month of Ramazan, the same ceremony of Pilgrimage and the same Poor-rate. Not in any way did Hazrat Mirza Sahib make the slightest alteration in the principles and ordinances of Islam. Repeatedly he declared to the following effect :—

“We admonish our followers that they should have faith in the *Kalimah*, “There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Apostle,” from the depth of their hearts. They should truly believe in all the God's Messengers and all Divine Books to whose truthfulness Quran testifies. They should act upon all etq

ordinances and commandments of Islam, absolving themselves of all the duties and responsibilities imposed upon them by God such as Prayers, Fasting, Pilgrimage, Poor-rate and they should abstain from all those things which have been prohibited.

All those articles of faith and ordinances of practice about which there has been agreement among the saints and divines of Islam as well as all those matters that have been named Islam through the consensus of opinion of *Ahl-i-Sunnat*, a belief in them all is obligatory.”

(Ayyámus-Sulh).

In short Hazrat Mirza Sahib has not made the slightest change in or departure from the original faith.

Is it against God's Commandments to Label a Community in Islam ?

Some people say that as the Holy Prophet did not himself name any community after his own name, therefore it is an innovation on the part of any one else to label a community after his name. So far as the question

of naming a religion by reference to the personality of its founder is concerned, we find its sanction in the Holy Quran itself. The Holy Book has repeatedly used the phrase **ملت إبراهيم** or "the faith of Abraham."

"And the religion of Abraham the upright." Now if it is permissible to call a creed after the name of its founder, why should it become a sin for Hazrat Mirza Sahib to label his followers after a name of the Holy Prophet? During the Holy Prophet's time there were different groups of his followers who were named separately according to their respective distinctive characteristics. Muslims who fled from their homes to take shelter in Madina were collectively called **مهاجرين** "Muhajireen", while in contrast the disciples who gave them shelter in Madina were designated as "Ansars." And both these names have been mentioned in the Holy Quran. So it is proved that naming different groups of Muslims on account of their respective distinguishing characteristics is a principle recognised by the Quran itself. Also the Holy Book allows the naming of a creed after the name of a person. How baseless

then the objection that as the Holy Prophet did not label any group after his own name, why should another person call his followers after the Holy Prophet's name? During the Holy Prophet's blessed time among his followers, there were no marked and distinctive schools of thought and hence there were no different groups based upon differential doctrinal view-points. But there were then different groups of followers of Islam on account of their different methods and ways of strengthening and aiding the cause of the faith and hence they were duly and safely given different names. To-day the house of Islam has already within its fold different schools of thought. Hazrat Mirza Sahib has been ordered under Divine Commandment to serve Islam through the method of disseminating the light of the faith and to organize a society from among the Muslims to carry out this Divine purpose. Why should it be forbidden to name a group of the faithful who stand in a particular age to espouse the cause of the faith in order to distinguish them from the already existing numerous schools of thought? The Ahmadiyya school of thought

is not a rival faith which seeks to supplant or replace the religion of Islam. This point has been proved above from the teachings of the founder. It is decidedly and purely a new school of thought within the fold of Islam which has been called into being to revive and serve the original faith in all its pristine purity. From other schools of thought existing within the nation, the Ahmadiyya school of thought differs not so much in doctrinal principles as in its practical way and method of advancing the cause of Islam in the world. If during the Holy Prophet's life-time different groups of Muslims were named differently because of their different ways and methods of helping the faith, there is no reason why in our own age it should be a sin to name a group from amongst the faithful who stand to serve the faith in a manner different from the rest as a mark of distinction? In this connection it is worthwhile to note that this call to serve the faith on particular lines has not originated in the mind of a man. It is a call from the Almighty Himself, Who is the real Protector and Helper of His faith in all ages and at all times. It

is through Divine call that Hazrat Mirza Sahib has stood up to serve the faith and the exact method adumbrated for the victorious marches is the way pointed out to him through Divine revelation. The Ahmadiyya call to serve Islam is not the call of a mortal, it is from Him Who originally revealed the faith. Even man-made movements within Islam may be named according to their different ways and methods of serving the faith or according to their different view-points. How painful is it then that a Divine ordained movement should be made the target of adverse criticism simply on account of its having been named after the Holy Prophet's name? Ignorance and perversity of mind could hardly go any further.

In the Holy Quran the general principle that different groups among Muslims may be given different names on the basis of their family connections in order to distinguish one from the other, has been recognised. "And we have made you into different tribes and families in order that the one may get distinguished from the other." Now is there any person who would condemn the formation

of different families and tribes among the Muslim nation or their being differently named for the sake of distinguishing one from the other, notwithstanding the fact that such a division undoubtedly leads to differences among them? At the death of the Holy Prophet of Islam, his companions had become divided into three definite parties in respect of the successorship—the Banu Hashim with Hazrat Ali at their head, the Ansar with Sad bin Ibadah as their chief and the Muhajireens with Hazrat Abu Bakr as their leader. The greatest and the most acute difference that could possibly arise and which might have developed into a schism splitting up the nation into three entirely rival groups (had it not been tactfully and firmly handled by Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Umar), became evident, all due to the difference of various groups and their having been differently recognised as such during the very lifetime of the Holy Prophet. But did any body condemn the very fact of the companions having been differently grouped into three divisions or their being separately recognised as such by three different names? It is

merely an hollow idealism which ignores the hard facts of life to desire that there should be no different schools of thought among a nation or that if there are different groups and parties, they should not be named separately. What is undesirable is the present-day pernicious habit of the Ulama to condemn one group or school of thought as kafir and outside the pale of Islam on account of its minor differences or to unnecessarily exaggerate and accentuate such differences instead of composing them by reference to the authority of the Quran and the Sunnah. What did the companions do? Did they entertain the idea of eliminating the different groups from among the Muslim nation, even after such an acute difference had centred round the much-disputed matter of successorship? The Ansar remained and were called as such, the Muhajreens remained just the same and the tribe of Banu Hashim were still recognised differently. Is it not a fact that the very first and by far the most acute and serious split in the Muslim nation is based upon and occurred on account of different family connections—the Banu Fatimah and Banu Ummayyah?

And yet none has ever heard an objection being preferred on this ground or none has ever characterised their being differently named as ^{an} evil to be uprooted ?

The great import underlying the name Ahmadiyya

The school of thought started by Hazrat Mirza Sahib is the one which is based not so much on doctrinal differences as on the difference of method and manner in securing the victorious marches of Islam in this age of science and reason. The one aim and true object before the Ahmadiyya Movement is to make the faith of Islam triumphant over all other religions. Such a step has been taken not because a sincere well-wisher of Islam sees in it the renaissance of the faith but the movement has been started on the basis of a Divine call, the one that sanctions the appearance at regular intervals of Mujaddids in Islam for the express purpose of reforming the Muslims and strengthening the faith. Hazrat Mira Sahib has also sounded the clarion call to Muslims inviting them to rally their scattered and disintegrated

forces. Thus he has brought into being a Jamá'at which is carrying on the work of Islamization of the world and he has named it after the Holy Prophet's name *Ahmad* and not after his own name. But it should not be supposed that the name *Ahmadiyya* is only an empty name which was anyhow given to it. The name has underlying it a great significance. It so aptly and beautifully sums up in one word the true role which this community has to play with respect to the renaissance of Islam that there is no other word or name that could replace it. Our Holy Prophet had two names *Ahmad* and *Muhammad*, the former meaning "a person who greatly praises the Almighty God" and the latter meaning "one who is greatly praised." Now it is a fact of history that there has been born no other person who has praised the Almighty God more than the Holy Prophet did and also there has existed no other person in the world who has had so much of God's blessing to become the praised one as it fell to be the lot of the Holy Prophet. Hence the two names *Ahmad* and *Muhammad* are not only the personal names of the Holy

Prophet but they have a real meaning underlying them, being also his real attributes. Consider another matter, the order of the two names. It is a Divine law that the more a person praises, in the real sense, the Almighty God, the more does He bless him to be perpetually remembered. Hence if a person desires to become the praised one (Muhammad), then he should in the first instance praise the Almighty God (become Ahmad). The Holy Prophet having praised God during the earlier period of his life, was blessed afterwards with the reward that he became the praised one in his later life, so that he first became Ahmad and was then subsequently blessed by the Almighty to become Muhammad. This sequence stands to reason. A person who desires that he may evolve all the potentialities of his soul, *i.e.*, he may become the praised one, for true praise consists in one's having utilised this life's opportunity to the best of one's endeavours in order to fully develop all the mental, moral and spiritual qualities with which he has been endowed—he must in the first instance resign and surrender himself completely to the will of the

Lord. Man's praising God in its ultimate meaning consists in absolutely annihilating his own self and in completely bowing before his Maker's will. This is in other words manifesting the quality of being Ahmad. When a person attains to such a stage of perfection, it is then that he is given a new life and the Divine Being fills other men's hearts with the love of such a person, *i.e.*, he becomes Muhammad or the praised one. The Holy Prophet of Islam during his thirteen years of Makkan life did manifest his great qualities of completely submitting himself to the Will of the Lord in a unique and wonderful manner. He bore all the persecution and oppression for the sake of his Lord's Will. Not only was this the case with his own self but the miracle was wrought that he had succeeded in inspiring a whole community with the same spirit of Ahmadiyyat. The whole history of mankind fails to cite another example of a nation who should have been purified to such an extent as became the privilege of the companions of the Holy Prophet. A whole nation was able to manifest its trait of Ahmadiyyat. What was the consequence

of this? There has been no other person nor another nation who have had the blessing of the Lord to become the praised one or ones besides the Holy Prophet and his illustrious companions. Thus the history of Islam testifies to the Divine law that if a community or a nation desires to attain to true heights of glory and greatness it must in the first instance humble itself completely before the Lord's Commandments. Herein is a great lesson for the decadent Muslims. There is no doubt that Muslims wish to become great and glorious once again. But then it will remain only a wishful thinking on their part until they adopt the correct procedure. Muslims must first completely subdue their inner selves in the path of the Almighty. Before they can be blessed with the victory over others, they have to subjugate their own inner desires of self. In other words before the Muslim nation can aspire to become the praised one in the world, it has to imbue itself with all those qualities that are the characteristics of a community who praises the Lord in its true meaning. Now that is exactly the message which Hazrat Mirza Sahib has brought

for his fallen nation. In a Persian couplet says he :—

از ره دین پروری آمد عروج اندر نخست
باز چون آید به آید هم ازین ره بالیقین

“Because of serving the faith, the nation attained to heights of glory. If again it would rise to the same heights, it is most certain that it would do so through the same method”.

Muslims to-day have not altogether lost the love of their faith or of their dear Prophet. What they lack is the spirit of self-reformation. They wish that their faith should once again become triumphant in the world but they do not try to find out the exact procedure for attaining that grand object. They desire that falsehood should be uprooted but they have no mind to rescue their own selves from the falsehood into which their own souls are immersed. If this nation truly desires to become great and glorious and therefore the praised one, they must in the first place humble themselves before the Lord's Commandments. In short, Muslims must *evolve their national character according to the standards of their faith before they may launch an offensive against others.* It is a

difficult path no doubt but this is the only one open for their revival—the way of Ahmadiyyat. Writes Hazrat Mirza Sahib.

“The meaning of Muhammad requires the traits of glory and greatness—traits which are characteristic of the beloved one. Muhammad means “the praised one” and glory is an indispensable accompaniment of it. On the contrary, *Ahmad* means one who greatly praises the attribute of a lover and therefore needs the traits of humility, patience, forgiveness and forbearance. These latter attributes are the manifestation of beauty. In short, the name *Muhammad* implies glory for one who is praised and must be the possessor of great qualities, whereas the name *Ahmad* is a manifestation of beauty because of its meaning, namely the possession of the attributes of a lover.”

(Alhakam, 1901).

Now the above is a very beautiful exposition of the true significance of the blessed names of the Holy Prophet. How admirably has Hazrat Mirza Sahib proved the Holy Prophet to be the perfect manifestation of all the best qualities that man can possess.

There is not a single verse of the Holy Quran from which it can be inferred that a community or a Jamá'at from amongst the Muslim nation may not choose a name for itself. And if it be said that these names create dissension and are therefore undesirable, then by this process of argumentation one shall have to discard many articles of faith. Just consider the Divine promise of Khilafat to the faithful which has been instituted to aid and strengthen the faith. Now, what a great source of trouble and division has this principle been among the Muslims! Because people have misused it and have been misled through it into forming different groups, should one deny the very principle itself? But as explained above Hazrat Mirza Sahib has named his Jamá'at *Ahmadiyya* in order that no mischief may be created by his opponents. For had he not named his community, it must have been called "Mirzaees" and thus instead of being named after the Holy Prophet it would have been called after Hazrat Mirza Sahib's name, thereby causing a valid ground for a schism in the Muslim community.

Hazrat Mirza Sahib however has chosen a

name to which no Muslim should object. Is not every Muslim, a follower of the Holy Prophet Ahmad and there by an Ahmadi? Does this name not include every follower of the faith? Thus, far from creating a division and split, this name is the cause of promoting unity among the already divided nation. By joining the ranks of the Ahmadiyya Movement one says goodbye to all kinds of dissensions because no Muslim would deny to be the follower of the Holy Prophet Ahmad. Moreover, this movement, having no distinctive doctrinal differences of its own upon minor points of Islamic Jurisprudence, is in fact not a sect in the received sense of the term. Among the Ahmadis are those who utter Ameen in a loud voice as well as those who say it silently; then one may fold his hands in prayer high up on his breast or low down and so on. These minor sectarian matters of difference have not the slightest importance in the ranks of the Ahmadiyya Movement which is as a matter of fact a Divinely ordained movement in order to unite all the various sects of Islam with the object of launching an Islamic spiritual war against all

other false faiths and thereby to re-establish the greatness and glory of the faith by ways and means which are in conformity with the demands of this age. Blessed the person who can truly discern with his spiritual eye the needs of the faith and does not shirk to aid the cause of truth as adumbrated by the Divine reformer of the times.