



Pathway to Paradise



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Lajna Imaillah USA

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Written by Lajna Imaillah USA

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Preface

Lajna Imaillah U.S.A. is an active auxiliary of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, and Allah has blessed its efforts in propagating Islam. By the Grace of Allah, the number of women seeking the truth and accepting Islam is rapidly increasing. One of Lajna Imaillah's responsibilities is training and educating its members and therefore it was decided that Lajna produce literature for this purpose.

The first such publication was a booklet called The Handbook for Muslim Women produced by Lajna Imaillah in 1975, under then President Rasheeda Saeed. However, by the beginning of the 1990's, it was apparent that the original booklet needed to be revised and updated.

At the 1992 National Lajna Executive Meeting, the National President, Amtul Hakim Abdullah, formed a committee to produce another booklet that would help Lajna members, new converts, and women of our society understand Islam and Ahmadiyyat. As committee Chairperson, Shakurah Nooriah conducted the survey among all the Lajna members in the U. S. A. for suggestions for the contents of this booklet. When the mass of suggestions came back, the committee realized that a complete book would be required to cover all the topics that Lajna members felt were important. This book is the result of that survey. Alhamdolillah, all Praise belongs to Allah.

The compilation and editing were done by Dr. Aziza Rahman with assistance from Aisha Sharif; chapters were written by

Fatimah Haneef, Shakurah Nooriah, Dr. Aziza Rahman, Zakia Mahmood, Ruqaiya Asad and Nycemah Yaqub. Other Committee members who provided materials and information are Khullat Alladin, Maryam Deveaux, Tahira Lateef, Nasira Bhatti, Sadiqa Sajid, Tazeen Ahmad and Aisha Sial. Munawar A. Saeed reviewed the manuscript and typesetting was done by Dr. Wajeeh Bajwa. May Allah reward their humble efforts.

All praise and gratitude belongs to Almighty Allah. May Allah accept this humble effort and make it truly a useful tool for the training and education of our members. Ameen.

Foreword

It is both sad and ironic that Islam which openly acknowledges the truth and veracity of other faiths in their original form is distorted and maligned, particularly in the West. Unfortunately some Muslim groups contribute to this false image of Islam by misusing their faith to suit and serve their own political and special agendas.

The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, founded in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who claimed on Divine authority to be the Promised Messiah and the World Reformer of the latter days, (as prophesied in the ancient scriptures of all great religions), is engaged in removing the misunderstandings about Islam. Thus Islam, contrary to general belief, does not permit use of force as an instrument for the spread of its message.

Again, Islam recognizes that all religions have the right to claim possession of some divine truth and different religions should teach unity and tolerance rather than division and strife.

It is beyond the scope of this book to cover all that is unjustly contributed to Islam, but Lajna Imaillah, a women's auxiliary of the Ahmadiyya Movement, presents in this book Islam's teachings on the role and status of women in Islam, its marriage system, and its viewpoint on some other contemporary issues.

The book, though primarily designed to be of special interest and guidance to new converts, will also be of great interest to a wider audience. This laudable effort of the Lajna is gratefully

acknowledged and should receive wide recognition.

M. M. AHMAD

Ameer Jamaat, U. S. A.

Introduction

Assalamo alaikum wa rahmatullahe wa barakatohu! May peace be with you and the mercy and blessings of Allah.

Accepting Islam and joining the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is, undoubtedly, the most important decision you will ever make. Therefore, Lajna Imaillah U. S. A. (Maidservants of Allah), the women's auxiliary of the Ahmadiyyat Muslim Community, has prepared this guide book hoping to make the transition into Islam and our community a blessed and successful endeavor.

This book may also serve as an introduction to those seeking more information about Islam but are not yet ready to make a commitment. This book is not intended to be a comprehensive work on Islam but rather a guide to answering the questions and clearing up some of the confusion faced by new Muslims and those encountering Islam for the first time. It lists Ahmadiyya Muslim educational resources so that anyone seeking knowledge may tap into them and drink deeply from the fountain of Islam's beauties.

Outstanding among those resources are the Holy Qur'an with the five-volume commentary, Hadith (Sayings of the Holy Prophet), books of the Promised Messiah and the Friday sermons of the International Head of the Ahmadi Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad. You may view those sermons

broadcast by satellite T.V. on Fridays, subscribe to the service of receiving the audio cassettes or borrow them from a local mosque.

Please take comfort that around you are others who were once seekers and new Muslims and understand your feelings. There are also those who were born into Ahmadiyyat Islam and consider your thirst for knowledge of God and His Message a great blessing. Please do not feel shy about asking questions and requesting help.

Along with the reading of this book, it is also recommended that you have a mentor on whom you can rely for assistance in learning prayers and Arabic. Feel free to call upon local Lajna members or the president of the local community.

Ultimately, we Muslims place our trust in Allah Almighty and turn to Him for guidance and help. Indeed, the worship of the Creator and Sustainer of All the Worlds is the endeavor from which we derive the greatest benefit. And it is that common striving that unites the diverse elements of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

We pray you will derive benefit from this book and that Allah Almighty will guide you on the right path. Ameen.

LAJNA IMAILLAH, U. S. A.

Chapter 1: Islamic Beliefs and Teachings

The religion of Islam provides a complete code of law and guidance. In this chapter, you will find a brief summary of the basic teachings and explanations of some terms. The very basic principles, the Articles of Faith, and the Pillars of Islam are briefly described, as are some other concepts in Islam. The status and mission of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) are introduced, and a description of the different sects in Islam is given. An explanation of the coming of the Promised Messiah and the Ahmadiyya Movement is presented.

As you become more involved with the study or practice of Islam, you will encounter many new words and principles and may wish to explore them further. The end of each chapter provides a list of books for more in-depth study of its contents. The final chapter of the book contains further references for future study.

It is important to note that practically all of the terminology used in Islam is in Arabic, as in the Holy Qur'an. For the purpose of your clear understanding, each term is listed both in Arabic and English.

ISLAM

Islam (an Arabic word meaning “peace and submission”) is

the name given by God Almighty (Allah) to the religion revealed by Him to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) through the Holy Qur'an. It means the attainment of peace through the surrender of one's will to the Will of Allah. One who so submits and follows the laws of Islam is called a Muslim.

OBJECT OF HUMAN CREATION

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

"And I have not created the Jinn and men but that they may worship Me." (51:57)

The true purpose of a human being's life is the worship of God, the attainment of His understanding and complete devotion to Him. He should follow Him perfectly as a slave follows his master. Allah has created human beings with the faculties that are appropriate for this aim, and revealed the Qur'an so that he may seek Allah through it. Thus, a Muslim's first duty is to His Creator; to worship Him and to follow His commands. This is known as "Haqu-Allah." His second duty is to serve humanity, "Haqul-Ibaad," for this is part of worship. A Muslim can show his love for His Creator by expressing love and compassion for all His creation.

THE ARTICLES OF FAITH (IMAN)

These are the six fundamental principles of faith which form the basis for a Muslim's belief, practice and understanding of

Islam. The Holy Qur'an states that one should believe in Allah, the Last Day, the Angels, His books and His prophets. It also states that Allah alone determines His Decree. (See Holy Qur'an, 2:178; 25:3)

1. Unity of Allah (Tauheed)

Acknowledgment of the Oneness of Allah is the most important principle of Islam, being the cornerstone of the faith and the basis for salvation. The most emphasized aspect of Allah in Islam is His Unity. The Kalimah Tayyeba is the basic doctrine of Islam. It is:

"La ilaha ilAllaho Muhammadur rasoolAllah."

There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His messenger.

To deny Allah's Oneness and to associate any other with Him (shirk) is the gravest sin in Islam. He is the sole Creator of the universe, and nothing can occur in it without His knowledge and His consent. One whole chapter of the Holy Qur'an (Sura Al-Ikhlās) is devoted exclusively to Allah's Oneness:

"Say, He is Allah, the One; Allah, the Independent and Besought of all. He begets not, nor is He begotten. And there is none like unto Him." (112:2-5).

2. Angels (Malai'kah)

Islam requires belief in angels. They are spiritual beings created by Allah to obey Him and carry out His commandments. Unlike man, angels have no free will and cannot act independently. They control the forces of nature by Allah's

command. Also by Allah's command angels serve as intermediaries in carrying out His will. In this sense they are also referred to as messengers (rasool) of Allah. Indeed, amongst their tasks are: to bring divine revelations to the prophets; bring punishment on the prophets' enemies; pray for and give glad tidings to believers; glorify Allah with His praise; and keep records of man's deeds.

Four of the most well known angels are: Gabriel (Jibraeel), Michael (Mikaeel), Raphael (Israfeel) and Israel (Israeel).

3. Books (Kutub)

Muslims believe that Allah revealed His laws in stages to mankind through His prophets, and therefore accept the Torah of Moses (peace be on him), the Psalms of David (peace be on him) and the Gospel (Injeel) of Jesus (peace be on him) as holy books, as well as the sacred scriptures of all other messengers of Allah. However, Muslims believe that all such revelations were limited to a specific time and people and are not preserved in their original purity, but subject to distortions. All the Holy Scriptures culminated in, and were perfected in, the Holy Qur'an (just as all religion was perfected in Islam). The Holy Qur'an says:

"This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favor on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion." (5:30)

4. Prophets (Anbiya)

All of Allah's prophets or messengers (rasool) are believed in and revered by Muslims. The Holy Qur'an states that Allah raised up prophets among the people of every nation, sending Divine

messages and warnings through these holy men. It says:

“... and there is no people to whom a Warner has not been sent.” (35:25)

Some of the prophets specifically mentioned in the Holy Qur'an are: Adam, Elisha, Job, David, Ezekiel, Hud, Abraham, Elijah, Jesus, Isaac, Ishmael, Luqman, Noah, Salih, Solomon, Jonah, John the Baptist, Jacob, Joseph and Muhammad. There are many others as Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

“And We did send messengers before thee; of them are some whom We have mentioned to thee, and of them there are some whom We have not mentioned to thee;...” (40:79)

Muslims are directed to make no distinction among these, and to accept them all. However, just as Muslims believe that the Holy Qur'an was sent to all mankind, encompassing the teachings of earlier scriptures, so also Muslims believe that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) is the greatest and the Seal of all the prophets, having been sent not to just one nation but to all nations and thus to all mankind.

5. The Day of Judgement (Yaumideen)

One of the most emphasized beliefs in the Holy Qur'an is the belief in the Day of Judgement. Islam teaches that physical death is not the end of man's existence, rather it is the door to a higher form of life which can bring one closer to Allah, depending on

one's deeds in this life. According to the Holy Qur'an, on the Day of Judgement this entire universe will come to an end, and the dead will be resurrected. Their deeds will be judged and they will be rewarded accordingly. Those with good records will merit Heaven, while those with bad deeds will be punished in Hell. No intercession will be accepted, each soul will be rewarded according to what it earns. However, Hell is a temporary condition and eventually its inhabitants will leave it.

The Promised Messiah (peace be on him) has explained life in the hereafter in this way:

“The Holy Qur'an has repeatedly affirmed that the life after death is not a new phenomenon and all its manifestations are reflections of this life. It has also stated that in the Hereafter all the spiritual conditions of this world will be manifested physically, both in the intermediate state and in the resurrection. Further it has emphasized that there will be unlimited progress in the hereafter. In short, according to the Holy Qur'an, hell and heaven are both reflections of a man's life, and are not something new that comes from outside,... and will be but reflections of the spiritual conditions of man in this life.” (The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam)

6. Divine Decree (Taqdir)

Muslims believe that Divine Decree controls the eventual outcome of all actions in this universe. It is the law or measure of a thing with regard to its growth and development. In the Holy Qur'an the term is explained as a universal law of Allah which is

working through the whole of creation, extending throughout the universe. (See Holy Qur'an 87:1-4). Within the boundaries of Divine Decree, man is given free will.

Other Important Beliefs of Muslims

Apart from the six fundamental beliefs already discussed, there are many other important beliefs in Islam. Some of them are:

Muslims believe that every person is born innocent and free from sin. Only when he reaches maturity of understanding and can distinguish between right and wrong, does he become accountable for his actions.

Muslims believe that Allah does not hold anyone responsible unless He has shown him the right way. Allah has always sent messengers and revelations before inflicting His punishment on people.

Muslims are required to follow their faith with reasoning and understanding, not blindly. A person should use his powers of reasoning and reflect in his heart on Allah's teachings.

THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

The five pillars of Islam represent the principle acts of worship which are required to practice the faith. Observance and practice of these acts is obligatory for all Muslims. They are:

1. Declaration of Faith (Kalimah Shahadah)

This is the first and foremost pillar of Islam and every other belief flows from it. A believer declares his acceptance of Islam by

reciting:

*“Ash-hado an-la ilaha ilAllaho wa ash-hado anna
Muhammadan abdohu wa rasoolohu”*

I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and His messenger.

2. Prayer

Prayer is the basic and most important means by which man communicates with Allah and draws near Him. Its importance cannot be emphasized enough. The Islamic concept of prayer is a direct pouring forth of the soul by the supplicant before the Divine Majesty. There is no need for, nor does Islam tolerate an intermediary between God and man. Prayer brings solace and comfort to the human mind and soul, lifting them up from a lowly state to unsurpassed heights. Islam also assures the believer that his prayers are heard. The Holy Qur'an says:

“When My servants ask thee concerning Me, say: I am near. I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he prays to Me. So they should hearken to Me and have believe in Me, that they may follow the right way.” (2:187)

Prayer also rids the believer of the bondage of sin and purifies the heart. The Holy Qur'an says:

“Recite that which has been revealed to you of the Book and observe Prayer. Surely, Prayer restrains one from indecency and manifest evil, and certainly the

remembrance of Allah is the greatest virtue.” (29:46)

The most important form of prayer in Islam is the salaah, the ritualistic daily prayer. Salaah has been prescribed five times a day, with set times for each prayer. Adherence to salaah with all its prescribed rituals is the most repeated injunction of the Holy Qur'an. The five daily prayers of salaah are:

1. Morning (Fajr). This prayer should be offered in the morning about one hour before sunrise. It is forbidden to pray while the sun is rising, because that may give the appearance of sun worship.
2. Midday (Zuhr). The time for this prayer is early afternoon, starting with the decline of the sun to mid afternoon.
3. Afternoon (Asr). Prayer is said in late afternoon but no later than half an hour before sunset.
4. Sunset (Maghrib). This prayer should be observed shortly after sunset. It must not be said while the sun is setting.
5. Nighttime (Isha). Isha prayer should be offered after nightfall when it is dark. It can be said up to midnight.

These prayers should be performed at their appropriate times and preferably in congregation. However if it is impossible for the afternoon prayers to be offered at their proper times, it is permissible to combine the Zuhr and Asr prayer. The Maghrib and Isha prayers may also be combined if necessary. For more

information on salaah in daily life, please see Chapter 4.

In addition to salaah which is compulsory for believers, Muslims may offer voluntary prayers (nawafil). The most important of these is Tahajjud, which literally means the giving up of sleep. It is offered during the latter part of the night, and Tahajjud is specifically mentioned in the Holy Qur'an as very beneficial for man's spiritual development and a method to gain nearness to Allah. (See Holy Qur'an, 17:79). The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) is reported to have gotten up regularly after midnight and to pass almost half the latter part of the night in Tahajjud prayers.

Islam also provides prayers for every need and occasion. Another form of prayer is remembrance of Allah throughout the day (Zikre-illahi). To remember Allah and ponder over His attributes brings one nearer to Him. In addition a Muslim may pray silently to Allah at any time. This is known as dua.

For further information on the form, parts and posture of salaah, see the Muslim Prayer Book or videotape on salaah.

3. Fasting during Ramadhan (Saum)

The third act of worship in Islam is the fasting during the Islamic month of Ramadhan by all able adult Muslims. By fasting, a Muslim can purify himself spiritually and physically, elevate his soul and obtain nearness to Allah. To fast is to abstain from food, drink, smoking and conjugal relations from dawn to sunset. Sacrificing of physical needs increases a Muslim's awareness of the suffering of the poor and needy. Ramadhan was appointed by God for this spiritual exercise. It was the month during which the

Holy Qur'an was first revealed to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him).

The Holy Qur'an allows exemption from fasting to the elderly, the chronically sick and children. They may make up for fasting by feeding the poor. Temporary exemption is permitted to those traveling, the sick, pregnant and nursing women and menstruating women. They are expected to make up the fasts at a later time.

As an additional effort, Muslims devote as much of their time as possible to the recitation of the Holy Qur'an and reflecting upon its meanings.

4. Tax on Wealth (Zakaat)

Zakaat is the fourth pillar of Islam, which can more appropriately be called the purification of wealth. It is a kind of tax which requires a Muslim to give up a certain amount of his possessions (2% rate on a yearly basis) for the upkeep of the poor and those who have no earning capacity; for the destitute; for travelers in need; for those serving in the way of Islam, for those fighting in the way of Allah; for slaves to buy their freedom; and for benevolent works. The amount varies according to the type of property owned. The tax can be levied on land, livestock, and liquid assets (gold, silver, stocks, and bonds etc.).

5. Pilgrimage (Hajj)

Hajj, the fifth pillar of Islam, is the pilgrimage to Mecca which a Muslim who is able bodied and has the means is required to perform at least once in his lifetime. It is an elaborate series of religious rites which extend over several days for their

accomplishment, performed at the Holy Kaabah in Mecca (Arabia) and other special holy sites. The central feature of this pilgrimage is the Kaabah, which is believed by Muslims to be the first house built for the worship of One God. It was rebuilt by the Prophet Abraham (peace be on him) and his son Ishmael, and later by the Holy Prophet himself. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) himself performed this pilgrimage. Historical records show that prophets before the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) also performed pilgrimage.

The Hajj serves as a striking reminder of the Oneness of Allah and it emphasizes the brotherhood and equality of human beings, as well as the importance of man's willingness to sacrifice himself for the sake of his Creator.

ISLAMIC LAW / JURISPRUDENCE (FIQAH)

Fiqah or Sharia refers to the religious laws which guide Muslims in the practical living of their daily lives. There are three sources of Islamic law: the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah and the Hadith.

1. The Holy Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an is the Holy Word of Allah conveyed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) by Divine revelation, over a period of 23 years. It is the sacred scripture of Islam which opens up the true and perfect path to salvation. It contains a complete code of teachings and laws suitable to the needs of every age and provides the means for the

spiritual and moral development of all mankind, as well as providing the remedy for its ills. The Holy Qur'an explains the true purpose for man's existence, which is to worship and serve Allah, his Creator, and to attain nearness to Him.

The Holy Qur'an is organized into chapters and verses. There are one hundred and fourteen chapters. A chapter is called a "sura"; each one having a specific name and a varying number of verses. Verses are called "ayah." Quotations from the Holy Qur'an are given as the chapter number followed by the verse number. For the purpose of completing the Qur'an during the holy month of Ramadhan it has been divided into thirty parts.

2. Practice of the Holy Prophet (Sunnah)

Sunnah is the transformation of the laws and teachings of the Holy Qur'an into action by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). By demonstrating the Word of God in a practical way, he simplified the problems of day to day living. He was the perfect exemplar of a true believer's way of life; a perfect model for his followers and for all mankind.

3. Sayings of the Holy Prophet (Hadith)

Hadith means the words actually spoken by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), or words that describe an observed incident related to his life. Hadith, which encompass every aspect of Islamic teachings and philosophy, were narrated by his close companions and compiled for the benefit of his followers and posterity. There are many compilations of Hadith. However, six are considered to be the most genuine and authentic. These are the compilations by Bukhari, Muslim,

Tirmidhi, Abu Daud, Ibn Majah and Nisai.

THE HOLY PROPHET MUHAMMAD

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was the greatest of Allah's prophets, and the last of the law-bearing prophets. The Holy Qur'an, the final revealed Book of Allah, was revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad over a period of 23 years. He was sent by Allah as a messenger to all of mankind, as stated in the Holy Qur'an:

*"We have sent thee as a messenger to all mankind.
Sufficient is Allah as a Witness." (4:80)*

Born in 570 A. D. in Mecca, Arabia, and orphaned at a very young age, Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) grew into manhood exhibiting such sterling qualities of truthfulness, integrity and piety that he became known throughout the land as the Trustworthy One (Al Ameen). When, at the age of forty, he was called to Prophethood by Allah, he immediately devoted his life to Allah's service and to the universal spread of Islam. After enduring thirteen years of unimaginable suffering at the hand of the fledgling religion's enemies, the Prophet and his followers left Mecca. Under Divine guidance he migrated to Medinah, where the first Muslim community (Ummah) was established. During the next ten years, the Holy Prophet's enemies continued their efforts to wipe out the new faith and its adherents, but were completely unsuccessful. Islam spread rapidly, and when the Holy Prophet returned to Mecca

ten years after his migration, it was in triumph with ten thousand followers. Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) forgave those who had opposed him and continued to propagate the teachings of Islam far and wide. At the time of his death in 632 A. D. in Medina, Islam had spread throughout Arabia.

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) left two legacies for mankind: the Holy Qur'an, from whose teachings the religion of Islam was established; and his life, which stands as the perfect model for all who seek nearness to their Creator. He perfectly demonstrated all the various phases of man's life: a model for the young and old, for parents and children; for friends, kinsmen and neighbors; for ruler and citizen, and for commander and saint. The followers of other prophets have claimed them to be model men, but only the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) proclaimed himself to be a model for all mankind. Only he had a Divine proclamation declaring him to be as such. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

"You have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar, for him who hopes to meet with Allah and the Last Day, and who remembers Allah much." (33:22).

SUCCESSORS (KHALIFA)

The word "Khalifa" means successor, vicegerent, substitute, or deputy. The Holy Qur'an has mentioned three types of Khalifa:

1. Khalifas of Allah, who are prophets such as Hazrat Adam and Hazrat David, (2:31).
2. Prophets who are the Khalifas of another and a greater prophet such as the Israelite Prophets who all were the Khalifas of Moses. (5:45)
3. Non-Prophet Khalifas of a Prophet, with or without temporal powers, such as godly people learned in the Law. Their mission is to protect and preserve the law from being tampered with. (24:56)

After the death of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), the third type of Khilafat was established by Allah. It was known as the Khilafate Rashida (the righteous Khilafat). The mission of these Khalifas is to protect the Law, and to bring people back to the right path. The special signs and characteristics of these Khalifas are:

1. They are appointed Khalifas through God's Decree in the sense that the hearts of the believers become inclined towards them and they voluntarily accept them as their Khalifas.
2. The religion which their mission is to serve becomes firmly established through their prayers and missionary efforts;
3. They enjoy peace of mind amidst hardships, privations and persecution which nothing can disturb; and

4. They worship God alone, i.e., in discharging their great responsibilities they fear no one and they carry on their duties undaunted by the difficulties in their way.

The Khalifa should fortify the spiritual organization set up by him and protect it from the enemies of Islam. Only a person whose life closely paralleled that of the Holy Prophet in terms of spirituality, piety and knowledge could be appointed his Khalifa. Accordingly, Hazrat Abu Bakr, the closest companion of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), was named his first successor. Hazrat Abu Bakr was followed by three other close and worthy companions; Hazrat Umar, Hazrat Usman, and Hazrat Ali. These four Khalifas are known as the “rightly guided successors” (Khalifate Rashideen). After the passing of Hazrat Ali, many factions sprung up among the Muslims, and the appointment of the Khalifa became a dynastic succession of the ruling families.

The institution of Khilafat was restored to its previous position in this century after the death of the Promised Messiah (peace be on him), with all the Divinely ordained conditions that accompanied the Righteous Khilafat. (See later in this chapter).

SECTS IN ISLAM

Anyone reading a newspaper or listening to the media today is aware that many different Islamic groups exist throughout the Muslim world. These groups, known as sects, differ with one another on the interpretation of some Islamic beliefs and their

practice.

The development of sects within Islam began very early in Islamic history. In fact, upon the death of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and the appointment of the first Khalifa, Hazrat Abu Bakr, differences in the community began to surface almost immediately. These differences and disagreements heightened to such a degree that the unity of the Islamic community was threatened. Indeed, within thirty years, the followers of Islam split and separated into two different sects. These are:

1. The Sunnis

This is the main sect of Muslims today. About 85% of the world's Muslims are Sunnis. They accept the authority of the Khilafate Rashideen (the rightly guided successors) and follow closely the custom and practice (sunnah) of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). They adhere to the Islamic law (Sharia) as interpreted by the four well-known jurists and Imams: Malik bin Anas, Abu Hanifa, Muhammad bin Idries al Shafi and Ahmad bin Hanbal.

2. The Shias

The Shias form a separate faction, originating from their belief that only Hazrat Ali was the legitimate successor to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). Hazrat Ali was the cousin and also son-in-law of the Holy Prophet, and Shias believe this blood relationship entitled only Ali and his descendants to inherit the spiritual "mantle" of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). They disown the three

other Khalifate Rashideen.

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) foretold of such divisions among his followers, and indeed, there are now seventy-three sects in Islam. Some important sects and their relationship with the two mainstream sects are:

Sunni Stream of Islam:

Ahle Sunnat
Ahle Hadith
Wahabis
Ahmadis

Shia Stream of Islam:

Zaydis
Twelvers
Seveners: Nizaris (Ismailis)
Mustalis (Bohras)

AHMADIYYAT

Ahmadiyyat is a sect of Islam, and not a new religion. It is, in fact, the renaissance of Islam. It is a movement, entirely within the fold of Islam, founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India, in 1889. He claimed to be the Messiah and Mahdi whose coming was foretold by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). His followers are called Ahmadi Muslims.

Ahmadi Muslims strictly follow the orthodox religion of Islam and have not added or taken out anything as far as the fundamental beliefs and acts of worship are concerned. The most

important distinction between Ahmadis and other Muslims is Ahmadi's acceptance of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be on him) as the Promised Messiah, and his Divine mission to revive faith in Allah, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and the Holy Qur'an.

Ahmadi Muslims have the same kind of enthusiasm for Islam as the early followers of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). They are devoted to the service of Islam and the spread of its teachings throughout the world. Ahmadis believe that the Promised Messiah's mission was also to cleanse Islam of the errors and superstitious customs that had crept in over fourteen centuries, and they practice Islam the way it was practiced at the time of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him).

There are three areas where the beliefs of Ahmadi Muslims differ from that of other Sunni Muslims. These are:

1. The Interpretation of the Finality of Hazrat Muhammad's Prophethood

In the Holy Qur'an (see 33:41), Allah bestowed the title "Khatam-al-Nabiyyin" (the Seal of Prophets) on the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). Non-Ahmadi Muslims interpret the verse to mean that there can be no prophet of any kind after Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), that the door of revelation has closed forever and that Allah will never speak directly to His servants again.

Ahmadi Muslims, on the other hand believe that Allah reveals Himself and speaks to His created beings and will

continue to do so till the end of time. Ahmadis interpret “Seal of Prophets” as a mark of distinction which implies great perfection of prophethood. They believe that prophethood will continue, but that there will never be any new law-bearing prophet after the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). Any prophet coming after him must be his follower and, therefore, come from the fold of Islam. This is what the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) himself prophesied, when he foretold the coming of Isa ibn Maryam from among his followers to rejuvenate Islam in the latter days. Ahmadis believe that this prophecy has been fulfilled in the coming of the Promised Messiah. Non-Ahmadi Muslims also believe this prophecy, but still await its fulfillment.

2. Jesus Christ’s Ascension to Heaven

The differences between Ahmadi Muslims and non-Ahmadi Muslims regarding Jesus (peace be on him) are quite significant. Many non-Ahmadis believe that Jesus was never put on the cross and that his place was taken by someone who resembled him. According to them, Jesus was physically lifted up into the heavens where he waits for his return to earth as the second advent.

Ahmadis believe that Jesus was put on the cross, but did not die on it. He was unconscious when taken down from the cross, having been nailed to it for only a few hours. He was nursed back to health by his close companions, and then traveled east to Kashmir, a northern province of India. There, he fulfilled his actual mission which was to preach to the lost tribes of Israel. He died a natural death at a considerable old age and his tomb can be

found in Srinagar, Kashmir, India.

3. The Coming of the Promised Messiah

All Muslims believe that in the Latter days a Reformer (Messiah and Mahdi) would appear and restore the religion of Islam to its former glory. There are many Hadith which refer to the coming of the Reformer, and present signs for his advent. This Reformer is referred to by various titles in the Hadith, such as “Messiah,” “Mahdi” and “Jesus, son of Mary.”

Non-Ahmadi Muslims have adopted the belief that as Jesus did not die but ascended bodily to heaven, he will return as the Messiah in the latter days of Islam. They also claim that the Mahdi (who they believe is a different person and would be from the fold of Islam) will spread Islam with a sword and wage war on all those who disbelieve.

Ahmadi Muslims reject this interpretation. They believe that Jesus has already died as all mortals must, and thus he cannot return. They interpret the second advent of Jesus (peace be on him) as a spiritual event, similar to the second coming of Elijah, as explained by Jesus himself. Just as John the Baptist had come fulfilling the prophecy of the second coming of Elijah, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be on him) has come fulfilling the prophecy of the second advent of Jesus (peace be on him). Ahmadis believe the Mahdi and Messiah are one and the same person, and that person is Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian. He came to revitalize the religion of Islam and his sword was his pen, with which he asserted the truth and superiority of Islam.

Hazrat Ahmad (peace be on him) was called “Jesus, son of Mary” because of many similarities in their missions: neither was a law-bearing prophet; Jesus followed Moses (peace be on him) after 1400 years and came to revitalize Judaism, while Hazrat Ahmad’s mission was to revitalize the teachings of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) after 1400 years; both were rejected by the scholars of their faith; and both emphasized the “jamali,” i.e, the gentler aspects of their religion.

*THE PROMISED MESSIAH, HAZRAT
MIRZA GHULAM AHMAD*

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be on him) was the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam and was the Promised Messiah of the latter days. Born in 1835 in Qadian, India, his life greatly mirrored that of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). He became acclaimed from an early age for his truthfulness, piety and integrity. His knowledge of Islam and his devoted defense of it against all critics was renowned. However, when he declared himself to be the Promised Messiah under Divine guidance in 1889, those that had revered him now attacked him. Undaunted, he continued his claim to be the Messiah as foretold by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), and the prophecies of the Holy Qur’an and Bible. In fact, he fulfilled all the existing prophecies concerning the advent of a reformer in the latter days. He also emphasized that his purpose in being appointed by Allah was to bring new life to the religion of Islam, which had become polluted

and corrupted over the ages, and to establish its supremacy over all other religions. He brought no new teachings, but was the most devoted follower and servant of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him).

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) had said:

“I swear by Him Who has power over my soul, a time shall come when the son of Mary shall appear among you. He will be a just judge and will break the cross and destroy the swine and will set aside a war.”

This hadith has been fulfilled by Hazrat Ahmad (peace be on him). He broke the cross by showing that Jesus died a natural death and that the Christian doctrines of Atonement and Trinity have no foundation. He destroyed the “swine” by founding the Ahmadiyya Movement, whose members have sworn to lead pure and simple lives and to keep themselves away from all vices. His mission was to show the beauties of Islam by peaceful means, by learned discussion, arguments, and writings, not by the sword. To this end he wrote more than eighty books during his lifetime, in four different languages.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be on him) died in 1908, leaving behind him a community of thousands, which has now swelled to millions worldwide and is carrying on with his mission.

Khilafat after the Promised Messiah

The institution of Khalifat (successors) was reestablished

after the death of the Promised Messiah in the same tradition as the Khilafate Rashida (the Righteous Successors). To the present day there have been four Khalifas. Today, the Supreme Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement is Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (may Allah strengthen him), who was elected to the position by the Electoral College. He is a grandson of the Promised Messiah.

For further information on the Ahmadiyya Khilafat, please see Chapter 7 of this book.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF ISLAM

This chapter has attempted to give you a brief outline of a Muslim's basic beliefs and principles. Unfortunately, the western media often portrays Islam in an erroneous way and creates a picture of rigid and fanatical fundamentalists. This is, of course, far from the truth. Islam is a universal religion. It claims to be the true way to God for all peoples, for all time.

The concept of universality in a religion requires that it overcomes not only geographic and national boundaries, but also the boundaries of time. Only Islam is able to make this claim, because it is a religion whose teachings are related to the human psyche, i.e., its soul and spirit. Islam emphasizes that any religion which is rooted in the human psyche transcends time and space. As the human psyche is unchangeable, then the religion which is closely connected to it is unchangeable also. In other words, no matter how mankind progresses in material ways, man's psychological needs will remain the same, and Islam will always have the means to fulfill them. Islam's universality is

demonstrated in many ways and on different levels:

1. Acceptance of all teachings

Islam is the only religion that accepts previous teachings and their bearers as coming from God. It does stipulate however, that these teachings have been tampered with, and can no longer be relied on as true guidance. Islam teaches that the Holy Qur'an incorporates in itself the true meanings of these previous teachings, and that its own integrity will always be guarded by Allah Himself. This acceptance and incorporation of other scriptures makes Islam a truly universal religion.

2. No compulsion in religion

For a religion to be truly universal, it has to appeal to people of all natures and cultures. Therefore it cannot be a teaching that is forced on others. Islam does not permit the use of force to spread its message. The Holy Qur'an says:

“There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong.....” (2:257).

The word “jihad” is frequently interpreted to mean “wage holy war.” In fact, it means “a striving.” Islamic jihad does not consist in killing and being killed but in striving hard to win the pleasure of God. The highest form of jihad is the struggle of man with his own soul to rid it of vices and ties to the material world, and to elevate his spirit to attain nearness to Allah. Another type of jihad may take the form of preaching and dissemination of the teaching of Islam by peaceful means. A third type of jihad is defending Islam against unprovoked aggression and attempt to physically destroy Islam by its enemies.

3. Equality of Man

Islam carries with it a strong message of brotherhood and the equality of man. This is an essential ingredient of universality. Islam teaches love for all things. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) says:

“Whoever is kind to the creation, God is kind to him; therefore be kind to man on earth whether he be good or bad; and being kind to the bad, is to withhold them from badness.”

Islam teaches that in the sight of Allah, all men are equal regardless of race, status or wealth. He judges them only on their good deeds. The last sermon of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) contains these beautiful words:

“O ye men! your God is One and your ancestor is one. An Arab possesses no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab over an Arab. A white is no way superior to a red, nor for that matter, a red to a white, but only to the extent to which he discharges his duty to God and man. The most honored among you in the sight of God is the most righteous among you.”

“O men, what I say to you, you must hear and remember. All Muslims are as brethren to each other. All of you are equal. All men, whatever station in life they may hold, are equal.”

While he was saying this, the Prophet raised his hands and joined the fingers of the one hand with the fingers of the other hand and then said:

“Even as the fingers of the two hands are equal, so are human beings equal to each other. No one has any right, any superiority to claim over another. You are as brothers... What I command today is not meant only for today. It is meant for all time. You are

expected to remember it and act upon it until you leave this world and go to the next to meet your Maker.”

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See appendix for additional references.

Chapter 2: Women's Issues

The Islamic teaching about treatment of women is one of the most misunderstood. Western women generally view Muslim women as repressed and deprived of their rights. The media portrays the stereotypical Muslim woman as fully covered and dominated by her husband, with little more status than a slave. You may be amazed to find, that for 1400 years, Muslim women have been enjoying rights for which western women are still struggling.

Islam provides guidance for a peaceful and ideal society. For such a society to exist, there must be a social system which upholds the rights and responsibilities of each individual. Such a system would provide a balance in the role and status of men and women, thus putting the status of women on an equal footing with that of men. Such a society was in fact created over 1400 years ago by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), through the guidance of Allah in the Holy Qur'an.

This chapter provides you with an explanation of the rights that Muslim women enjoy, along with other women's issues and their place in society.

TREATMENT OF WOMEN IN ISLAM

Before discussing the position of women in Islam, it is important to understand what the condition of women was

before the advent of Islam. In pre-Islamic Arabia, and in the rest of the world, their condition was equal to that of slaves and chattels with no rights. Women could neither own nor inherit property. In domestic affairs, they had no rights over their children or themselves; in fact, they could be sold or abandoned by their husbands at will. If they were abused by their husbands, they had no recourse to divorce. They had no real status in the society, not being respected as wife, mother or daughter. In fact, daughters were considered worthless and were often killed at birth. Women were given little or no education, and had no say in religious matters, being regarded as limited in spirituality and intellect.

These abusive conditions existed well into the 19th century in most parts of the world, even in the United States, where some basic rights were given to women only in the beginning of the 20th century. But in Arabia, in the 6th century, with the advent of Islam the condition of women changed dramatically. Almost overnight, women were endowed with equal rights and put on the same level with men. In the Holy Qur'an, Allah makes it clear that He created men and women as equal beings. He says:

"He has created you from a single being; then of the same kind made its mate." (39:7)

This single verse removes any taint of inferiority leveled at womankind by men, as in some other scriptures. The Holy Qur'an further ensures woman's equality on the spiritual, intellectual, social and economic level. In addition, women's rights were safeguarded by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings

of Allah be on him), as he himself carried out the commands of Allah and treated women with great honor, kindness and dignity.

SPIRITUAL STATUS OF MUSLIM WOMEN

The most important change that Islam brought for women was to raise their spiritual status. Allah has clearly declared in the Holy Qur'an that woman has a soul, that she has the same spiritual capacity as man, and that she can attain equal spiritual rewards by her own efforts. The Holy Qur'an says:

"But whoso does good works, whether male or female, and is a believer, such shall enter heaven..." (4:125)

The Holy Qur'an is unique amongst all scriptures in that it repeatedly emphasizes this equality by addressing both men and women in many verses. It leaves no doubt as to the spiritual level of women. It says:

"Surely the men who submit and the women who submit, and the believing men and the believing women, and the obedient men and the obedient women, and the truthful men and the truthful women, and the humble men and the humble women, and the almsgiving men and the almsgiving women, and the fasting men and the fasting women, and the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard their chastity, and the men who praise God and the women who praise God, Allah has prepared for all of them forgiveness and a mighty reward." (33:36)

INTELLECTUAL STATUS OF MUSLIM WOMEN

Another area where you will find that Muslim women have the lead over other women is in the field of education. Islam stresses that education for men and women is of equal importance, and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) laid down that education is compulsory for both. He said:

“It is the duty of every Muslim man and every Muslim woman to acquire knowledge.”

He also exhorted both to “seek knowledge even if you have to go to China,” and to “seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.”

The Holy Qur’an says:

“He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is granted wisdom has indeed been granted abundant good; and none would take heed except those endowed with understanding.” (2:270)

In other words, only those who ponder can understand the signs of God and come closest to him. The Qur’an further teaches us a short prayer which simply says:

“O my Lord, increase me in knowledge.” (20:115)

In keeping with these commands, you will find that Muslim women, and especially Ahmadi Muslim women are well-

educated. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) encouraged his wives to seek knowledge and once stated that “half the religion of Islam could be learned from Hazrat Ayesha (his wife).” Indeed, after his death, the advice of his wives was sought by the entire Muslim community. Now a days you will see Muslim women active in many professions, such as medicine, nursing and teaching.

It is interesting to note that at the time Islam brought enlightenment for women, in Europe a woman displaying any kind of knowledge was in danger of being burnt at the stake for being a witch! Furthermore, most universities, even in the United States, did not admit women to higher learning until this century.

ECONOMIC STATUS OF MUSLIM WOMEN

Never before was woman given the economic freedom such as given her by Islam. Islam makes it clear that she is entitled to possess wealth and property of her own, whether it is inherited or earned, and has full rights over it. The Holy Qur’an states:

“Men shall have the share of what they have earned, and women shall have the share of what they have earned. And ask Allah of His bounty. Surely, Allah has perfect knowledge of all things.” (4:33)

This verse established the equality of men and women in so far as their works are concerned. Woman has the right to manage her own wealth. A married woman is not even required to spend out of her own wealth, as it is the duty of her husband to provide

for her.

The Holy Qur'an also states that:

"...men are guardians over women, because Allah made some of them excel others and because they spend of their wealth" (4:35)

This means that the husband is responsible for his wife's needs and her protection, and he is to supply the money for the maintenance of his wife and their home.

Islam further protected the economic status of woman by requiring a husband to give her a dowry at the time of marriage. This becomes part of her exclusive wealth, and her husband has no right over it, unless she wishes to share it with him. The Holy Qur'an states:

"And give the women their dowries willingly. But if they, of their own pleasure remit to you a part thereof, then enjoy it as something wholesome and pleasant." (4:5)

Interestingly, this is addressed not only to the husband but also the woman's relatives. They have no right over it. The common practice found in some Islamic countries today where the groom demands that his bride bring a dowry of gold and household items to the marriage is totally un-Islamic.

Finally, Islam gave woman the right to inherit. She is entitled to inherit from the deceased in her role of mother, wife, daughter or sister. The Holy Qur'an makes clear that:

"For men there is a share of that which parents and near

relatives leave, and for women there is a share of that which parents and near relatives leave, whether it be a little or much — a determined share.” (4:8)

Full and specific details of division of property are found in the Holy Qur'an (4:12-13).

SOCIAL STATUS OF MUSLIM WOMEN

The social status of women changed dramatically with the advent of Islam. Great changes took place in the lives of women. Society was given clear guidance by the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) for the treatment of women in their roles as daughter, wife and mother.

1. Daughter

The pre-Islamic practice of killing infant girls at birth for fear of humiliation or poverty was totally abolished by Islam. In the Holy Qur'an, Allah says:

“...Slay not your children for fear of poverty, it is We who provide for you and for them, and approach not foul deeds, whether open or secret...” (6:152)

And

“... He creates what He pleases, He bestows daughters upon whom He pleases, and He bestows sons on whom He pleases.” (42:50)

After forbidding the killing of children, Islam goes on to teach

a father that he must raise his daughters in the same way as his sons. In fact, taking good care of a daughter opens the door to Paradise for a Muslim. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) said:

“He who brings up two girls through their childhood will appear on the Day of Judgement attached to me like two fingers of a hand.” (Muslim)

Thus it is clear that Islam raised the status of a daughter from that of being despised and unwanted to being loved and cherished.

2. Wife

Islam changed the role of wife from being little more than a servant to being an equal with her husband on all levels. The Holy Qur'an makes it clear that in marriage women have rights similar to men. It says:

“Of His signs is that He created mates for you of your own kind that you may find peace of mind through them, and He has put love and tenderness between you. In that surely are signs for a people that reflect.” (30:22)

Marriage is a harmonious union of two souls, with the object of marriage to seek comfort from each other. The Holy Qur'an beautifully defines the equality of the relationship with this verse:

“..They are a garment for you and you are a garment for them.” (2:188)

This shows that Islam regards husband and wife equal in providing support, comfort and protection for one another, fitting each other like a garment fits the body. Islam further teaches that the woman be treated with kindness and generosity and be given equal rights in marriage and divorce. Before Islam a woman could not initiate the divorce process even if she was seriously mistreated. Islam permits her to seek divorce if absolutely necessary. (The Islamic Marriage system is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3).

3. Mother

In her role as mother, Muslim woman achieves her highest social status, because the mother is revered in Islam unlike any other individual. The Holy Qur'an repeatedly directs Muslims to care for their parents, especially the mother. Allah says:

"And We have enjoined man to be good to his parents; his mother bears him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning takes two years...." (31:15)

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) emphasized the love and respect due to the mother by saying:

"Paradise lies at the feet of the mother."

In another hadith, he is reported to have stated when asked to whom a man should be kind: "to your mother." When asked a second time, again said: "to your mother." He was asked a third time, again the reply was: "your mother." Only upon being asked a fourth time did he reply: "your father." Thus he emphasized

three times how important it is for a Muslim to take of his/her mother and to give full consideration and respect to her needs and wishes.

HIJAB (THE VEIL)

The teachings of Islam concerning hijab (the veil) and segregation of the sexes is probably the most confusing and difficult to accept for Western society. This is because of the widespread and erroneous notion that observing hijab is a heavy restriction imposed on Muslim women. In fact, the very opposite is true. You will find that hijab is a means of protecting women, and providing them with freedom from many social ills. The word “*purdah*” is also used to describe the concept and the practice of hijab.

Islam provides guidance not only for individuals, but also lays down rules for the good of all society. In this case, the institution of hijab/purdah guards the moral condition of society. Muslim women not only have responsibilities as wife, mother and daughter, they also share with men the responsibility of upholding the moral standard of society. The Holy Qur’an has laid down that one of the methods that men and women are to use to achieve that goal is hijab. It says:

“Say to the believing men that they restrain their eyes and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Surely, Allah is well aware of what they do.” (24:31)

And

“Say to the believing women that they restrain their looks and guard their private parts, and that they display not their beauty or their embellishment except that which is apparent thereof, and that they draw their head coverings over their bosoms.....” (24:32)

The verse goes on to list close relatives from whom observing hijab/purdah is not necessary.

From these verses it is made clear that both men and women are to conduct themselves with modesty and propriety at all times, and especially when in each other's presence. This teaching is based on the fact that Islam recognizes that “prevention is the better part of a cure.” So segregation of the sexes is prescribed so that situations which cannot be controlled afterwards, are not allowed to develop in the first place. In this way, erosion of moral values can be prevented, and society is safeguarded from problems such as adultery, teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

The Holy Qur'an requires that Muslim women dress modestly, cover their heads and wear an outer garment to conceal their beauty from strangers. However, you must understand that this physical covering is the only first step to developing hijab. The true and full observance of hijab/purdah is achieved when “veiling” extends to a man or woman's mind and heart. This means that one should veil or shield his/her mind and heart from impure and immoral thoughts when in contact with the opposite sex. One's thoughts, words and actions should reflect a sisterly love and respect towards fellow beings. This behavior leads to one's own moral upliftment, and also creates an atmosphere

where men and women, instead of resenting and degrading each other, treat each other with respect and understanding.

Another verse of the Holy Qur'an states:

"O Prophet! tell thy wives and thy daughters, and the women of the believers, that they should pull down upon them of their outer cloaks from their heads over their faces. That is more likely that they may thus be recognized and not molested. And Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful." (33:60)

A woman who is following the rules of hijab in her dress and actions is not likely to be treated in a disrespectful way by men. Thus hijab/purdah provides Muslim women with freedom from some of the problems that women in Western society are facing today. In Islam woman is not regarded as a "sex object," nor is she exploited or harassed in this demeaning manner. As you are probably aware, various feminist movements are trying to deal with these issues today, sometimes with little success.

Islam has undoubtedly given woman dignity and honor through hijab/purdah, and has provided a protection for her so that she can pursue her activities more freely. This gives Muslim women peace of mind. You may have noticed that most Muslim women who follow the practice of hijab/purdah appear to be more relaxed and at ease with themselves. This is because Islam has reduced the importance of physical appearance as a mark of self-esteem. A Muslim woman is free to develop in herself other talents, and does not have to rely on her physical beauty to achieve what she wants. At the same time when a woman practices

hijab/purdah in the true manner, she fulfills her responsibility to society and gains satisfaction in the knowledge that she is able to gain nearness to Allah.

(For more information on wearing hijab/purdah, please see Chapter 4).

THE ROLE OF MUSLIM WOMEN TODAY

This chapter has attempted to give you an idea of the position that Muslim women hold in society, and the rights given to them by Islam. As you can see, no other teaching so specifically addresses the needs of women. Muslim women have all the rights that Muslim men enjoy, and in some ways, have certain privileges which men do not enjoy.

To sum up, a Muslim woman's primary duty is her duty to Allah, and then comes her duty to her fellow beings. Islam reminds her that her foremost responsibility is to her husband and children. However, it does not restrict her to that role; she has the right to go out and work if she needs to, but she is not obliged to shoulder the financial responsibility for the household. She is encouraged to seek higher education for her own improvement, and subsequently for her offspring. The institution of purdah provides her with an environment of respect and dignity. In no way does it limit her pursuit of a professional career, a business or other kind of profitable activity.

Some misconceptions concerning the role of woman in society are prevalent because unfortunately, some "Muslim" countries do not practice the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. In

these societies, the education and training of Muslim women is very much neglected. This may be due to political reasons; or to the fact that some of these societies live in abject poverty, where women are deprived of their right to education. Lacking this tool, they are unaware of the status Islam has given them and are still submitting to conditions similar to the time before Islam was born.

However, within the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, you will find that women are well aware of the rights that were brought to them by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). Not only that, the men in the community are also conscious of their womenfolk's rights. Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, the present Head of the community, repeatedly reminds his followers of their rights and duties. Most Ahmadi women are well-educated, and active in many spheres of life, while maintaining their dignity through Islam. One of the beautiful aspects of Islamic teaching is that by defining the role of women in society, and then by giving dignity to that role, Muslim women feel fulfilled in themselves. This is a great blessing from God Almighty.

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See appendix for additional references.

Chapter 3: The Islamic Marriage System

As you go further into the study of Islam, you will discover another beautiful facet of this religion, and that is that it provides complete guidance for all aspects of daily living. You will find that the instructions regarding marriage are particularly comprehensive in both the Holy Qur'an and Hadith (the sayings of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be on him). Marriage structures the basic unit of human society and lays the foundation of the family. Healthy families are required for the cohesive preservation of the human race. So Allah commands the believers to marry for its benefits morally, spiritually, socially, psychologically.

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be on him) said:

“Marriage is my precept and my practice. Those who do not follow my practice are not of me.”

And

“When a man has married, he has completed one half of his religion.”

The second Khalifa (successor) to the Promised Messiah has elaborated the role of marriage in fulfilling our obligations to our fellow beings which are next only to our relations to God. He

emphasized:

“It is our duty to see that it is duly respected and adhered to faithfully. It entails a heavy responsibility for both man and woman, but I find very few people realize it. When it is attempted, it is done on a very inadequate scale. The Islamic law has only distinguished between two sets of rules. One pertains to God Himself, and the other to our fellow beings. Marriage therefore falls into the second category and may be considered to be its chief proponent. The Islamic law has made the most of it, but there are many people that do not seem to understand [the law] fully. Neither do they try to benefit themselves by it. Their case is like that of a baby who would be quite willing to barter a precious diamond for a base coin. I wish people could only realize the importance of marriage.”

As you can see, marriage is a very serious undertaking for a Muslim. However, you will discover a feast of intellectual, emotional and spiritual fulfillment as you find guidance from Allah and His Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) on marital/family relations, from proper mate selection to marital problem resolution. You will see an operational system where viable structure, clear responsibilities, roles and goals guide you; where checks and balances provide a safety net for all parties in a family. Of course, Islam presents the ideal. Its realization depends on the actions of each family member.

THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE IN ISLAM

As you will have gathered by now, Muslims cannot enter into marriage lightly, just on a whim. Allah has enjoined marriage for the believers for three basic reasons. They are:

1. To enable a man and a woman to live together and experience love and happiness, within Islamic law.
2. To produce children, and provide a stable and righteous environment for their upbringing.
3. To provide a legal union which safeguards society from moral and social degradation.

The first two reasons are self-explanatory; both take into account the natural urges of human beings. The third point looks beyond the individual, and establishes marriage as the most important tool for creating an ideal society. How does marriage accomplish this?

First, you must understand that one of the most important moral values in Islam is chastity, i.e., the purity of both the individual and the whole society. Islam regards marriage as the means by which man's natural urges and needs, both physical and emotional, are controlled and satisfied at the same time. Uncontrolled and uninhibited satisfaction of physical desire is simply not permitted in Islam. Adultery and fornication are grave sins. A Muslim man cannot go to any woman and merely satisfy his physical desires; he has to do so through a legal contract of marriage, which carries with it the additional responsibilities, duties and liabilities of family and children for the rest of his life.

The result of this restriction is the creation of a society whose morals are protected. In fact, the Holy Qur'an mentions the marriage contract (nikah) by the word *ihsan*, which means a fortress. The man who contracts marriage is a *muhsin*, that is he builds a fortress. The woman who marries him is a *muhsinah*, which means that she has come into the protection of that fort, in order to protect herself and their morals.

PREMARITAL CONDUCT

It should be perfectly clear by now that Islam does not permit sexual relations, even preliminary acts of physical love, outside of marriage. To remain sexually inactive and chaste before marriage is an extremely important injunction in the Holy Qur'an. Adultery, fornication and having secret relationships with the opposite sex is a heinous moral lapse which is categorically condemned in the strongest terms by Islam. This prohibition includes dating, secret paramours and experimental living together. As these are regarded as heavy sins, they carry severe penalties. (See Holy Qur'an, 24:3-4).

As you have already read in Chapter 2, the Holy Qur'an has provided the means for maintaining chastity. It directs believing men and women to restrain themselves from looking at each so openly as to be sexually excited by them. It further directs them to restrain their ears from listening to flirtatious and tempting talk and to avoid occasions which might lead to temptation. Fasting, dieting and exercise also help to control passions and maintain chastity.

MATE SELECTION AND ARRANGED MARRIAGES

One of the key factors in building a good marriage is, of course, the selection of the right person with whom to spend the rest of your life. Here again, Islam provides guidance. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) said:

“Some people marry for beauty, others for rank, and others for wealth; but you should marry a good and pious woman.”

Piety, or moral goodness, is the most important quality to be sought in a potential mate. If you and your partner have righteousness, you will approach all aspects of marriage in a God-fearing way and will try to make a success of things. Other factors to be taken into consideration in mate selection are family background, age, education and interests. Prayer is also an essential tool for deciding on a prospective mate. Muslims are taught the Istikhara Prayer to seek Allah’s guidance in making this important decision. (See Muslim Prayer Book, p.34)

With these injunctions in mind, marriages amongst Muslims are usually arranged, with the consent of both boy and girl. Parents or guardians arrange the marriages of their children once they reach a suitable age and level of maturity. If you have grown up in Western society, you may find this idea difficult to accept at first. But this method of mate selection has been practiced for hundreds of years and really does produce more stable and happy marriages. A comparison of divorce rates between Western

society, where dating is the norm, and Islamic societies will clearly show that arranged marriages last longer and are more secure.

The reason for this is that parents or guardians usually know their child's character the best, and will try to choose a mate who is the most compatible. When a man and a woman are dating, there is the danger that the passions of the moment may overwhelm their reason and judgement. They may marry because of physical attraction only, and find incompatibilities in each other when it is too late. Physical attraction, or "being in love" can wear off quickly in the face of other problems and so lead to dissatisfaction and eventual separation. On the other hand, in an arranged marriage, physical attraction plays a minor role, and couples do not enter into marriage with the same expectation of "romantic love," but see it as a partnership where both have to make personal sacrifices and have to work at pleasing their mate. The gradual buildup of respect, trust and affection usually produces a bond between husband and wife which is stronger and more enduring than one based on physical attraction alone.

No marriage can be arranged and entered into without the consent of both man and woman. However, the woman needs a guardian or representative for the arrangement. The purpose is to safeguard her rights and to maintain her modesty. Islam allows both the man and the woman to see and talk to each other before the marriage, with a chaperon present at these meetings. (See: Khalifatul Masih IV, Questions and answers, 6/21/92).

If you have just accepted Islam and your parents are not Muslim, you will need to procure a guardian for yourself if you wish to be married. This can be done by either asking someone of

your own choice personally, or requesting that the proper Jamaat authority recommend one. The guardian, who must be male, is responsible for protecting the legal, religious, social and marital rights of the bride. If any premarital counseling is required, the guardian acts in this capacity or arranges it.

The Ahmadiyya Movement Marriage Department has a data-bank of eligible men and women. Information will be made available about the appropriate Ahmadi eligible in the category (age, etc.) that would be of interest to you. If you are interested, ask your local Jamaat president how to contact the proper marriage secretary for placement of your name in the data bank. Naturally all information is strictly confidential.

PROHIBITIONS CONCERNING MARRIAGE

Allah has laid down prohibitions concerning marriage, and other aspects of relations between men and woman.

There are certain people that a Muslim is not permitted to marry. These are listed in the Holy Qur'an (see 4:24), and include mother, father, sister, brother, aunts and uncles, nephews and nieces. However, Muslims are permitted to marry cousins. There are still other prohibited marriage relationships. For example, a man cannot marry his stepdaughter if he has cohabited with her biological mother. Nor can he have two sisters in marriage at the same time. (See Holy Qur'an, 4:23).

Islam also makes clear whom a Muslim is allowed to marry as far as his/her religion is concerned. Marriage with an idolater is totally forbidden (see Holy Qur'an, 2:222) for both sexes.

However, men are allowed to marry women of the “people of the Book” (i.e., those who follow a revealed scripture), although it is not considered preferable.

Furthermore, you should be aware that the Promised Messiah (peace be on him) limited the category “people of the Book” to Jewish and Christian women. He has also prohibited Ahmadi women from marrying non-Ahmadi men. The reasoning behind this is very sound. A woman is not permitted to marry outside her faith because when she is in her husband’s home and environment, she and her children are exposed to non-Muslim and non-Ahmadi culture and practices. This makes it very difficult for her to remain steadfast in her own faith and bring up her children as Muslims. A man, on the other hand can more easily influence his wife and bring her into the Islamic way of life.

THE ISLAMIC MARRIAGE CEREMONY

There are a number of requirements for a marriage to be legal: Both man and woman must willingly consent to the marriage before it can take place.

The marriage must be made public, with two witnesses from each side present at the ceremony. Islam does not allow secret marriages.

The groom and the bride’s guardian must be present at the Nikah. The bride may or may not be present.

The dower (mehr) is a mandatory gift from the husband to the wife. (See Holy Qur’an, 4:25). This sum should be proportionate to the husband’s means. The dower amount is

announced at the time of the marriage ceremony. It can be given all at once or in incremental payments. Once given, it is solely the property of the wife and she may do with it as she pleases. The amount should be agreeable to both parties.

The actual marriage ceremony (nikah) is performed by a lawful Islamic authority, perhaps a missionary or the President of the Jamaat. The procedure of the religious ceremony itself is simple. Once the marriage (nikah) forms are filled out, and the nikah is publicly announced and witnessed, the contract is legal. The person officiating recites the nikah sermon which was recited by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and asks for the consent of both parties. This is followed by prayer. (See Muslim Prayer Book).

Couples must get a legal marriage license and whatever else is required by the law of the land. In some U. S. States, the law requires that the person performing the nikah must be civilly licensed. If so qualified his solemnizing of the rituals is sufficient to legalize the marriage. If he is not licensed, the couple must precede their religion ceremony with civil ceremony, usually performed at the City Hall. The guardian of the bride should ensure that these steps are followed so that the bride's rights as a wife are legally and civilly protected.

The tradition (sunnah) of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) requires a reception (walimah) to be given by the groom after the marriage to celebrate the consummation of the marriage. This is a mandatory part of the marriage celebration and should be on a scale according to the husband's means. The present Khalifa has recognized the need for

hospitality but has cautioned Muslims against extravagance in marital celebrations.

RELATIONSHIP OF HUSBAND AND WIFE IN THE MARRIAGE BOND

Here again, you will find that Islam provides guidance for every aspect of family life. The role of husband and wife are clearly defined so that each knows what is expected of them. Islam views marriage as an equal partnership between two people, by which they can gain Allah's pleasure through mutual cooperation, trust, respect and faithfulness. If you adhere to the following guidelines laid down by Allah, you will be able to enjoy a successful partnership.

Each partner in the marriage has been assigned a particular role. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

*"He said, our Lord is He Who gave unto everything its proper form and then guided it to its proper function."
(20:51)*

Accordingly, man has been assigned to working outside the home as the breadwinner because of his greater physical strength and psychological abilities; likewise woman is physiologically and emotionally suited to bearing children and has been made responsible for their upbringing and maintaining the home.

To ensure the smooth running of the partnership, one partner has been put in charge. Allah has appointed the husband to act as a "guardian" over his wife (see Holy Qur'an, 4:35). This

does not give him the right to dominate his wife or abuse her in any way. It simply means that he is responsible for her well-being and that he has to spend out of his earnings to maintain the family and the household. In return, his wife is expected to obey him.

Mutual respect and cooperation are essential to producing a good relationship between husband and wife. Allah says:

“They are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them...” (Holy Qur’an, 2:188)

Clothing is worn for protection, adornment and to hide defects. In the same way, man and woman should protect each other’s honor and morals, and make each other feel secure with love, support and understanding. They should keep each other’s secrets and should not air each other’s shortcomings in public.

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was very concerned about the welfare of women. He constantly advised his followers to treat their wives with kindness. His own conduct with his wives provides the perfect example. Some hadith are:

“The most perfect believer in the matter of faith is he whose behavior is best; and the best of you are those who behave best to their wives.”

“Let no Muslim man entertain any rancor against a Muslim woman. Should he dislike one quality in her, he would find another which is pleasing.”

FAMILY PLANNING AND BIRTH CONTROL

The Qur'an advises that there should be a two-year interval between the birth of each child to allow the mother's body to rejuvenate (see Holy Qur'an, 31:15; 2:234). It also recommends nursing for a two year period to help achieve this. Abortion is forbidden as a means of birth control, although it is permitted if the life of the mother is in danger.

Birth control is prohibited if resorted to for fear of financial strain. Please remember also that the use of birth control to avoid the responsibility of child rearing nullifies one of the primary reasons for marriage. This attitude is opposed to the spirit of Islamic teachings on marriage.

POLYGAMY

This is a subject that generates more misconceptions about Islam than any other. Islam does allow polygamy, i.e., having more than one wife at the same time, but you should be aware that it does not encourage it. In fact, Islam is the only religion that limited this ancient and widespread practice. Previous teachings permitted unlimited and unrestricted polygamy. Islam limits the number of wives allowed to four, and also discourages the practice. Allah says:

"But if you feel you many not be able to deal justly between them, then marry only one." (Holy Qur'an, 4:4).

If a man cannot be satisfied with one woman, it is better for society that he assumes full moral and financial responsibility for a second one. Having a mistress and committing adultery is a grievous sin and causes moral decline of society.

Polygamy becomes a necessity under certain circumstances, but can only be practiced only under certain conditions, and then with restrictions. A man can marry again if his wife is chronically ill and cannot fulfil the obligations of marriage; or if she is unable to have children; or under certain conditions of wartime, when marrying widows to provide for orphans may be necessary to protect the morals of society. Also it must be emphasized that Ahmadiyya Movement policy requires that Ahmadi citizens obey the law of the land in which they live as long as that law does not conflict with an express command from Allah.

Islam forbids polyandry which is when a woman is married to more than one husband. Women who are married to chronically ill, sterile or impotent husbands are allowed recourse to divorce, if they feel the situation is unbearable.

DIVORCE

Islam permits divorce, but according to the Hadith, it is one of the most displeasing acts in the sight of Allah. In fact, the divorce procedure is so designed to allow every chance for conciliation. Under Islamic law, divorce must be pronounced three times, with an interval of a month between each pronouncement. During this time, the wife stays in the family home (unless she has committed adultery), and reconciliation is

encouraged. If the divorce does become final, the husband is instructed to “send her away in kindness.” He is financially responsible for his children until they come of age, and is responsible for his wife for a period (iddat) after the divorce.

Some acceptable reasons for divorce in Islam are:

Adultery, but four eyewitnesses are required if the accused mate denies it.

Husbands’ refusal to economically maintain the family.

Husbands’ refusal to have conjugal relations for more than three months.

Physical or sexual abuse of a spouse or children.

Incompatibility of spouses to such a degree that differences cannot be reconciled.

Divorce may be initiated by either husband or wife. If the husband seeks the divorce, it is called talaq, and he may not ask the return of any gifts he made to the wife. If the wife wants the divorce, it is khulla, and she should return her dower. Both divorced men and women are permitted to remarry (other mates).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- Holy Qur’an with commentary. Trans. & Ed. Malik Ghulam Farid. U.K., 1994. Chapter 4.
- Holy Qur’an with commentary. 5 volumes. Trans. & Ed. Malik Ghulam Farid. U. K., 1988. Chapter 4.
- Gardens of the Righteous. Hadith (sayings of the Holy Prophet). Trans. Muhammad Zafrulla Khan.

- Ahmad, Maulana Sheikh Mubarak. Islam on Marital Rights. U.K.
- Baveja, Malik Ram. Woman in Islam. New York 1981.
- Khan, Muhammad Zafrulla. Punishment of Adultery in Islam. U.K.

See appendix for additional references.

Chapter 4: The Daily Life of a Muslim Woman

As you come to this chapter, you are already aware of the rights and responsibilities that Islam has given to women. This chapter describes some Islamic practices which Muslim women incorporate into daily life to fulfill those responsibilities. Some of the topics discussed are basic etiquettes, dietary laws, hygienic practices, the practice of hijab in daily life and the observance of Muslim holidays and festivals.

If you have recently come into the fold of Islam, you are probably meeting sisters from cultures and backgrounds very different from yours. A discussion on the Islamic concept of sisterhood is included, with suggestions to help you feel more comfortable in your new religious environment.

THE MOST EXCELLENT EXEMPLAR

Islam teaches that the purpose of a Muslim's life is to worship Allah and to devote oneself to seeking His love. It is natural for a human being to love Allah and desire to win His love because that love is ingrained into a person's soul before birth. Muslims recite the Azan (call to Prayer) in an infant's right ear immediately after birth. Therefore, from the very beginning the child is subconsciously attracted to the Truth and Beauty of The Creator.

But how does one keep this goal in mind while going about

one's daily business? When one is involved in the mundane routine of daily life, it may appear difficult to maintain the spiritual level required to win Allah's love. Allah himself provided mankind with the means to do this. He revealed Himself through the Holy Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and raised him up to be the "Perfect Leader" and teacher of the Quranic law to all people everywhere until the end of time. Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was called on to furnish an example through following which mankind's love for their Maker could find full expression and its highest fulfillment by enabling them to win the love of Allah.

Therefore the best example of how Muslims should live their daily lives is found in the exemplary life and perfect character of this "Perfect Man." (See Holy Qur'an, 33:22). So the study of his life and character is an essential of a Muslim's education. You will find no situation in daily life for which guidance from the Holy Prophet does not exist. A practicing Muslim is in constant spiritual association with the Messenger of Allah, day and night. She prays as he did, she teaches her children moral values by quoting the hadith to them, she greets fellow Muslims with his words of greeting, and she supplicates Allah to shower His blessings on the Holy Prophet and his people.

OBSERVANCE OF TAQWA

There is another tool which is provided by Islamic teaching to help keep a Muslim on the path of the righteous. This is the

concept of taqwa. The word “taqwa” can best be defined as the “fear of Allah.” However, that is not to say that one should live in the dread of the Almighty, or that He is a Dreadful Being. Rather, it should be regarded as the fear of the loss of Allah’s love. Allah’s love for His creatures is boundless, but a Muslim should be aware that if she disregards His commands, she may lose His Protection and His Bounty. No one can become truly righteous until taqwa has entered every facet of their daily life.

Hazrat Ubbay bin Kab, a companion of the Holy Prophet, aptly explained taqwa by likening muttaqi (the righteous) to one who walks through thorny bushes, taking care that his clothes are not caught in and torn by their branches. In other words, a righteous person is one who is ever on his guard against sin and takes God for his shield against temptation.

Thus if you remember that Allah sees your every action, and hears your every word at all times, you would steer clear of wrongdoing. All kinds of problems can be avoided or resolved if every action taken is based on taqwa. Taqwa can be demonstrated in daily life if simple values are constantly practiced, such as sympathy, tolerance, humility, kind speech and gentleness, patience and truthfulness.

PRAYER IN DAILY LIFE

In Chapter 1, the Islamic prayer or salaah was discussed. Salaah is offered five times daily, at the appointed times of Fajr (at dawn); Zuhr (after midday); Asr (late afternoon); Maghrib (after the sun sets) and Isha (at night). Observing these prayers is the

most important activity of a Muslim's day.

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) advised his followers that offering the required prayers at their proper times is especially pleasing to Allah. He further instructed that recitation of the Holy Qur'an after Fajr prayer every morning is also pleasing to Him, even if only a few verses are read. Some sayings of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) concerning prayer are:

Prayer is the essence of worship.

Prayer averts misfortune.

Beg of Allah all that you stand in need of, even the salt you need or the shoelace that has snapped.

He who desires that Allah should accept his prayers when is distressed and hard-pressed, should pray constantly when he is at ease.

Salaat is the central and principal form of Islamic worship, and must be observed with all its rituals and etiquettes including a ritual ablution (wudhu) before performing salaat. A Muslim woman must be dressed modestly, with head, arms (at least to the elbow), and legs covered. A woman is not permitted to perform salaat during their monthly period, nor enter the prayer area of a mosque, until she has taken a ritual bath (see under Hygiene).

However Islamic worship is not limited to salaat alone, for the need to communicate with one's Creator arises constantly during the day. This need is fulfilled by reciting prayers and remembrance of Allah (Zikre Illahi) at any time. The Holy Qur'an contains many short prayers for all kinds of situations, and the prayers used by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of

Allah be on him) and the Promised Messiah (peace be on him) are well documented. You will find several Arabic expressions used for the remembrance of Allah in Chapter 5.

Therefore, as a Muslim woman, your day begins and ends with the worship of Allah and glorifying Him as the only Master of everything in the Heavens, the Earth, and the whole Universe. As you move through the day, your body clock will become aware of prayer times, and you will be able to prostrate yourself and repeat: “All praise belongs to My Lord, the Most High.”

DAILY LIVING AND ISLAMIC MANNERS

After morning prayers and devotions, you are prepared to meet the events of the day. The most important points to remember are to act with taqwa (the fear of Allah) in your heart, and to keep in mind the commandments of Allah, and the sunnah (practices) and hadith (sayings) of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him).

Whether or not you are employed outside your home, your daily activities focus first and foremost on the material, moral and spiritual needs of your family members. A Muslim woman has the power to make her home a heaven or a hell, according to her own piety and actions. So it is very necessary to have continuous religious training at home. Bliss can be achieved by constant devotion and care to fear Allah and follow the example of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). Balance and moderation in all things are vital to all aspects of home life. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him)

emphasized the value of a simple life. Some of his hadith are:

A simple way of life is part of Faith.

Truly rich is he who has no desire for that which others have.

Beware of luxury for the true servants of Allah love not luxury.

Courtesy and good behavior are a very important part of the Islamic way of life. The Holy Qur'an says:

"Whatever good you do, Allah will recognize its value."
(2:198)

The essence of good conduct is in moderation, balance, harmony, restraint, patience and forgiveness. There are hundreds of ways of showing ideal Islamic manners. Here are some hadith of the Holy Prophet:

Good conduct is half of Faith.

A deed is judged by its motives.

Restrain your tongue and your passions and you will enter Paradise.

Good deeds are a shield against an evil death.

A gentle word is charity.

Seek exaltation in the sight of Allah through courtesy towards one who behaves churlishly towards you and through bestowing favors upon him who deprives you of that which is due you.

Honor the guest.

He who desires to enlarge his means or to lengthen his days should strengthen his ties of kinship.

One who eats his fill while his neighbor is hungry by his side is not a believer.

Extend your greetings to all alike; you will have peace. It is wrong to discriminate.

Pray for and visit the sick. Shed silent tears of grief for the deceased.

ISLAMIC DIETARY LAWS

As with all matters concerning a Muslim's life, you will find that Islam provides guidance for a pure and healthy life. The Holy Qur'an says:

"O ye who believe, eat of the good things We have provided for you, and render thanks to Allah, if it is He Whom you worship.

He has made unlawful to you only that which dies of itself, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that on which the name of any other than Allah has been invoked. But he who is driven by necessity, being neither disobedient nor exceeding the limit, it shall be no sin for him. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful."

(2:173,174)

The first three categories are prohibited because they are harmful to the body, and that which is harmful to the body is harmful to the spirit. The last prohibition relates to something which is directly harmful morally and spiritually, as it amounts to association of others with God. Allah has made the provision that a believer may use prohibited food if absolutely necessary; i.e., if it is a matter of life and death.

The term “*halal*” means “that which is lawful for you”; thus halal meat is that which has been slaughtered in the name of Allah, and has had the blood drained out from it. The term “haram” means that which is unlawful for you, and includes blood, pork and alcohol. Allah has further commanded that you eat only what is “tayyab,” that is, food that is good and wholesome. Something may be halal, but it may not be tayyab, and thus should be avoided. Islam teaches that the condition of the body affects the condition of the spirit, and thus great care should be taken to keep one’s body healthy and fit. Islam further teaches that all food should be taken in moderation, and nothing should be indulged into excess.

There is no good reason for not eating halal meat at all times, unless you are somewhere where it is absolutely unavailable. Halal meat can usually be obtained in Muslim stores. However, if it is totally unavailable, then it is permissible to eat meat from regular markets and invoke the name of Allah over it before cooking and eating it.

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) never ate his fill. He has said:

Kill not your hearts with excessive eating and drinking.

There is no vessel worse for a person to fill than his stomach. A few mouthfuls should suffice to keep him on his feet. But if he must eat more, then let him fill one-third of his stomach with food, one-third with drink and leave one-third for easy breathing.

When you begin to eat, pronounce the name of Allah the Exalted. If you forget in the beginning, say “In the name of Allah first and last.”

Do not drink liquor, for it is the key to every vice.

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) always used his right hand for eating, drinking and putting on his clothes, and the left for purposes other than these.

ISLAMIC HYGIENE

The most important aspect of good hygiene is cleanliness. In accordance with the Islamic belief that the condition of the body affects the mind, physical cleanliness is essential for spiritual well-being. Allah says:

“Allah desires not to put you in a difficulty: but desires to purify you and complete His favors unto you that you may prosper.” (Holy Qur’an, 5:7)

The concern here is for the purification of the mind and soul, and Islam emphasizes that external purity leads to internal purity, just as external impurity leads to internal impurity.

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) stressed the importance of cleanliness. He said:

Cleanliness is half of faith.

Purification is the key of prayer.

When you visit your brethren tidy up your clothes and your mounts for Allah does not like dirt and untidiness.

Thus if you maintain outward cleanliness, you are preparing yourself for inner purification. A pure mind in a pure body is a Muslim’s goal. Islam teaches two ways of cleaning the body, ablution and bathing:

I. Wudhu (Ablution)

Cleanliness is particularly emphasized in connection with salaah (prayer), as a Muslim is expected to try to be in a prayerful state at all times. To this end, Muslims are commanded to perform the ritual washing of certain parts of the body in preparation for salaah. The Holy Qur'an says:

"O you who believe! When you rise up for prayer, wash your faces and your hands as far as the elbows, and wipe your heads, and (wash) your feet up to the ankles." (5:7)

The way in which the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) performed wudhu is as follows:

The hands are washed to the wrists three times.

The mouth is rinsed with water three times.

The nostrils are cleaned three times by snuffing a little water into them and blowing the nose if necessary.

The complete face is washed with water three times.

The right arm, and then the left, is washed from wrist to elbow.

The head is wiped over with wet hands, and the inner side of the ears wiped with the forefingers and the outer side with the thumbs.

Finally, the feet are washed to the ankles, the right one first.

While you may perform ablution before every prayer, it becomes necessary only after using the restroom, after vomiting or bleeding occurs and after one has been asleep. Acquiring the habit of wudhu not only fulfills the religious injunction, it also helps you maintain habitual cleanliness and self discipline.

If no water is available, clean dust may be substituted. The hands are passed over the dust, and then passed over face and arms. This is called “*tayyummum*.”

II. Bathing

Bathing is the complete washing of the entire body. As Islam encourages one to be in a constant state of cleanliness, it goes without saying that bathing should be part of a Muslim’s daily hygiene. Allah states in the Holy Qur’an:

“Allah loves those who keep themselves clean.” (2:223)

There are certain activities after which Muslims are instructed to take a ritual bath in order to purify themselves for salaah. These are: after sexual intercourse, at the end of the menstrual period and after stoppage of bleeding after childbirth. At these times, the bath should include the steps of wudhu, followed by washing the entire body including the hair.

It is also a sunnah of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) to take a bath in preparation for religious occasions, such as Friday (*Juma*) prayers and holiday (*Eid*) prayers.

Other Hygienic practices

Another hygienic practice promoted by Islam is the washing of the private parts of the body after using the toilet. Water is used to clean these areas, and only the left hand should be used for this purpose. The use of water aids in the removal of bacteria from the body and thus helps to prevent infection. Hands, of course,

should be thoroughly washed after the process.

In addition, certain other hygienic practices observed by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) have been encouraged for all Muslims. These include: oiling and combing of hair after washing, keeping fingernails and toenails trimmed and clean, and removal of superfluous body hair, including the armpits and pubic areas. He also encouraged the use of perfume after bathing. Muslims are commanded to keep their clothes clean and neat also. Clothing, whether simple or rich, should be clean and free from dirt.

When Muslims practice Islamic hygiene in the correct manner, they benefit in two ways: their outward purity helps them achieve inner purity, and the whole society benefits because many health hazards can be avoided.

PRACTICE OF HIJAB IN DAILY LIFE

In Chapter 2, Women's Issues, you have already come across the explanation of hijab or purdah. Once again, Islam stresses the relationship between body and mind. The wearing of the outer garments and veiling of the body leads to veiling of the heart and shielding it from impure thoughts.

The Holy Qur'an tells women to wear an outer covering and to draw their head coverings over their bosoms. It also advises them to cover their faces. However, there is no one type of dress that is compulsory for all Muslim women. The form of the veil adopted varies from country to country. As you have probably seen, Pakistani women wear a long coat with a head scarf that can

cover the face, known as a “burqa.” Women in the Middle East wear a head covering over long dresses.

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV, Supreme Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement has set clear guidelines for observing hijab/purdah for Ahmadi women in Western countries. He advises women born and bred in Pakistan who have moved here, to maintain the form of hijab/purdah that they used there, i.e., the burqa, with the face covered. Women who work outside the home may take off their hijab/purdah at work, if necessary, but should wear it at all other times.

Huzoor has defined “minimum Islamic purdah” as wearing a loose fitting outer garment and a head scarf. The face may be uncovered, but without makeup. This is adequate for sisters new to Islam, and may be used by others who are unable to use the complete burqa. Generally, Islam requires modesty in dress, with arms and legs covered. Clothes should be loose and the curves of the body should not be discernible, especially in public. A newcomer to Islam should not feel insecure about the way she dresses as long as her dress follows the Islamic code of modesty.

The conduct of a Muslim woman is a very important part of observing hijab/purdah. Whether at work, or among family and friends, a Muslim woman must conduct herself with great propriety and decorum. It is advisable to avoid idle chitchat with the opposite sex, mixed parties and shaking hands with the opposite sex.

MUSLIM FESTIVALS AND CEREMONIES

All religions have their own special days of worship, celebrations, rituals and observances. Islamic festivals and ceremonies are also distinct ways of glorifying Allah and sharing the joy that flow from the blessings of being the “best people” who are guided to the true faith.

Some Islamic observances are as follows:

1. Friday Prayer Service (Juma) Friday is the holy day for Muslim worship, with a congregational service held at the time of Zuhr prayer. The Imam delivers a sermon (*khutba*), and then the Zuhr prayer is offered in congregation. This is known as Juma prayer. Attendance is obligatory for Muslim men, and women should attend whenever they are able to as the blessings received for attending are very great. At a particular moment during the service, angels come near to the worshipers and they ask Allah to especially bless the faithful who are present in the congregation.

Before attending Juma prayers, a Muslim should follow the sunnah of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and take a complete bath, put on clean clothes, use perfume and avoid eating odorous food. After Juma prayers, Muslims may go back to their businesses.

2. Eid ul Fitr (Festival at the end of Ramadhan)

The end of the Holy month of Ramadhan is marked

by the festival of Eid ul Fitr. This joyous day is celebrated to give thanks for the blessings of Ramadhan. Muslims attend the congregational Eid prayer service which is held in the morning, and then spend the rest of the day exchanging greetings and gifts with family and friends. They wear new clothing, cook delicious food and invite friends and neighbors to celebrate with them. Fasting during Ramadhan inspires sympathy for the hungry and needy, and encourages Muslims to donate generously to the poor.

3. Eid ul Azhia (Festival of Sacrifice)

This festival comes about ten weeks after Eid ul Fitr, and marks the completion of Hajj (Holy pilgrimage to Mecca). It is the festival of Sacrifice, commemorating the time when the Prophet Abraham (peace be on him) was ready to sacrifice his son, Ishmael (peace be on him) for the sake of Allah. As a result of Abraham's willing obedience, Allah did not permit Ishmael to be sacrificed, and an animal was substituted instead. It is their obedience to Allah that is celebrated by Muslims the world over. On this Eid, those that can afford it sacrifice an animal and share the meat among families, neighbors and the poor.

4. Other occasions celebrated by Muslims include weddings, births and religious gatherings. At weddings, the nikah and walimah are usually celebrated. The birth of a child is celebrated by

sacrificing an animal and inviting relatives friends and the poor to a feast called the “Aqiqa.” When a child finishes the Holy Qur’an for the first time, his parents celebrate with an “Ameen,” where friends join in prayer for the child, and sweets are distributed.

The Ahmadiyya Movement holds many functions, on the national, regional and local scale. Not only do these gatherings, known as jalsa and ijtemah, provide great moral and spiritual uplift, they also give members the opportunity to meet old and new friends. Some days that are especially celebrated are Seeratun – Nabi Day (celebration of the exemplary character of the Holy Prophet), Masih Mauood Day (Promised Messiah Day), Musleh Mauood Day (celebration of the Promised Son) and Khilafat Day (to celebrate Allah’s mercy in providing the blessings of Khilafat). Another celebration is that of Religious Founders’ Day, where people of other faiths are invited to talk about their religion and its founder.

Muslims, especially Ahmadis, do not celebrate birthdays in the same fashion as they are celebrated in Western society. A birthday is seen as the decrease of the life span by a year, thus a cause for prayer rather than a celebration. Muslims take part in national holidays, such as Independence day and Thanksgiving, but do not celebrate Christmas, Easter, Halloween and Valentine’s day.

5. Janaza Service (Funeral service)

The transitions from this world to the next and the disposal of a deceased are serious matters in all cultures and religions. In Islam death is treated with great dignity. A deceased Muslim is due utmost respect and his body is handled according to the sunnah (action) of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). The body is given a ritual bath, and wrapped in two white sheets before being put in a coffin. Once it is prepared, the funeral service is held. The Imam leads the Janaza prayer, with the mourners standing in rows behind him. After this, the body is buried, usually in a graveyard that belongs to the Ahmadiyya Community. Cremation is not permitted in Islam.

If you are a convert to Islam, your next of kin may be Christian, or some other faith. As your body will legally belong to them after your death, you should discuss with them your wishes for funereal service and burial arrangements. It would be advisable to document your instructions for removal and disposition of your body, and provide your relatives and the Ahmadiyya Community with a copy. Also you should have funds earmarked for these purposes. Your relatives should also be made aware that your estate would be divided according to the laws of the Holy Qur'an (4:8-13). This requires a legally binding

Islamic will.

THE ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF SISTERHOOD

If you are a new convert to Islam through Ahmadiyyat, you will be meeting Ahmadi women from other countries. While their customs and language may make them seem like strangers to you, they are not strangers. You are bonded to them as sisters in religion. Moreover, you are all members of the Ahmadi women's organization, the Lajna Imaillah (see Chapter 7 for more information).

From the earliest days of Islam, there have existed noble and blessed women who are an example for Muslim women today. They demonstrated their outstanding characteristics by excelling in good works. They learned and then taught the ideals of their Faith to others, with piety, humility, love, and self-sacrificing service. Some of these ladies were Hazrat Khadija and Hazrat Ayesha, wives of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him); Hazrat Nusrat Jehan, the wife of the Promised Messiah; Hazrat Amtul Hai Sahiba, Hazrat Umme Nasir Sahiba, Hazrat Maryam Sahiba and Hazrat Maryam Siddiqi, who were wives of the late Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II. They all held the office of President of the International Lajna Imaillah.

Lajna Imaillah, which means “maidservants of Allah,” tries to follow the example of these women, and encourages its members to do good works. By attending the meetings of your local chapter and joining in their activities, you will come to feel part of this sisterhood of Muslim women. Many Ahmadi women

in the United States are from Pakistan, and many of them do not speak English well. Although they may not be able to verbally communicate with you very well, be assured that in their hearts they regard you as their Muslim sister. So greet them warmly at Lajna meetings and you will find that cultural and language barriers gradually melt away. Be aware also that some social customs you encounter are cultural and not religious. The Holy Qur'an and Hadith clearly define Islamic law, so it is not essential to slavishly follow someone else's culture. Another aspect of sisterhood in Islam is the spiritual relationship between you and your sisters in Faith. This is dependant on sharing duties that promote the cause of Islam. These include acquiring, practicing and teaching moral and spiritual knowledge.

Some tried and tested suggestions for enhancing sisterly relations are:

1. Remembering Allah much throughout the day.
2. Paying attention to the five daily prayers, memorizing them in Arabic and with translation, reading and understanding the Holy Qur'an, memorizing and practicing hadith.
3. Studying about Islam with your sisters in faith.
4. Attending regularly the Jamaat meetings and volunteering your services for Islam.
5. Paying Jamaat dues, making donations to the needy.
6. Praying with and for your sisters that misunderstandings and cultural differences be

lovingly overcome.

7. Dressing modestly in an Islamic manner.
8. Accepting and returning sisterly social invitations that establish mutual respect and affection.
9. Learning and using phrases in the language of your sisters.

PROGRESS TOWARDS PERSONAL SPIRITUAL REFORMATION

As you follow the path of truth and beauty in Islam, it may not be easy to leave old habits and ways behind. Changing and improving your way of thinking and living is a great achievement which requires a mountain of patience, especially when you encounter trials and setbacks that test your faith. At this point, the first and best answer is to seek refuge with Allah, through worship. Secondly, concentrating on doing good for others and helping spread the message of Islam are proven methods for earning spiritual growth.

When in doubt, try and keep your heart, thoughts and sight firmly focused on seeking refuge in Allah with patience and trust. Allah revealed in the Holy Qur'an that He answers the prayers of believers (see Holy Qur'an, 2:187). Even when the way is dark and dreary, and you are not making the progress you hoped for, do not even think of giving up! Concentrate your efforts on self-improvement, and beg Allah's help.

You may encounter opposition for your new beliefs from

your family and friends. (See Chapter 6 – Contemporary Issues). Try and resist their efforts to entice you back to your former habits. Suffering and trials strengthen spiritual progress. Even if you make mistakes, keep praying for help because Allah is most Forgiving, Ever Merciful and Acceptor of Repentance.

To safeguard your faith, keep company with pious sisters, remain devoted in prayer and good works. Accept your sisters loving offers of support. Fasting for purification, repentance and forgiveness helps to overcome weaknesses. If someone tries to influence you away from Islam, tell them about the truth and beauty of Islam — and influence them instead!

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- Holy Qur'an with commentary. Trans. & Ed. Malik Ghulam Farid. U. K. 1994.
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- Gardens of the Righteous. Hadith (sayings of the Holy Prophet). Trans. Muhammad Zafrulla Khan.
- Ahmad, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood. Way of the Seekers. Washington, D.C.
- Chaudri, Rashid Ahmad. Muslim Festivals and Ceremonies. U. K., 1988.
- Khan, Muhammad Zafrulla. Wisdom of the Holy Prophet. U. K., 1988.

See the appendix for additional references.

Chapter 5: Some Islamic Expressions and Short Prayers Used in Daily Life

This chapter contains some Arabic expressions that are used frequently by Muslims in day-to-day life. You will hear them used constantly by Muslims on many occasions. Some are quotations from the Holy Qur'an and used for the remembrance of Allah.

The expressions are given in Arabic first, with English transliteration, followed by meaning and appropriate occasion of use.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem.

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.

This should be recited before beginning any task.

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

Aaoozobillahe minushaitanir rajeem.

I seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the accursed.

This should be said before beginning recitation of the Holy Qur'an, together with Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem. Also used to ward off bad thoughts, loss of temper or evil.

رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

Rabbe zidni ilma.

O Lord, increase my knowledge.

This short prayer may be said before reading the Holy Qur'an or before any type of study.

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ

Subhaan Allah.

Glory to Allah.

To express admiration or praise for Allah.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ

Alhamdo lillah.

All praise belongs to Allah.

Use this to show appreciation of Allah's blessings; e.g., when you receive good news, or whenever you wish to praise Allah.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

Allaho akbar.

Allah is the Greatest.

This is used in azaan and salaah, and also be said any time in praise of Allah.

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ - الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ - اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

Subhaan Allah, Alhamdo lillah, Allaho Akbar.

Glory to Allah, all praise belongs to Allah, Allah is the Greatest.

These three expressions are repeated after finishing salaah. The first two are said 33 times and the third should be said 34 times, making 100 in all. Prayer beads or fingers may be used to keep count.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ وَلِلَّهِ الْحَمْدُ

Allaho Akbar, Allaho Akbar, la illaha illaha illalaho, wa Allaho Akbar, Allaho Akbar wa lillahil hamd.

Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest; there is no God but Allah, and Allah is the Greatest; Allah is the Greatest and all praise belongs to Allah.

This is a takbeer which is recited repeatedly on the way to and from Eid Prayer. It is also recited for three days following Eid after every prayer. This follows a tradition of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him).

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ رَبِّي مِنْ كُلِّ ذَنْبٍ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ

Astaghferullah Rabbi min kulle zumbin wa atoobo ileh.

I seek forgiveness from Allah for all my sins and turn to Him.

Can be used anytime to ask forgiveness from Allah. It is also repeated after finishing salaah to beg forgiveness for lapses in concentration during salaah. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) said it seventy times a day.

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ

Astaghferullah.

I seek forgiveness from Allah.

A shortened version of the above prayer.

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

Assalamo alaikum wa rahmatullahe wa barakatohu.

Peace be on you and the mercy and blessings of Allah.

This prayer is used by Muslims to greet each other. The shortened version assalamo alaikum can be used also.

وَعَلَيْكُمْ السَّلَام

Wa alaikum salaam.

And peace be on you too.

This expression is the reply to the above greeting.

فِي أَمَانِ اللَّهِ

Fee amaan Allah.

In the protection of Allah.

You say this when you see anyone off on a journey.

إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

Inshallah.

If Allah so wills.

This should be said when talking of future plans.

مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ

Maashallah.

As Allah willed.

This is said when praising a person or object.

جَزَاكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ الْجَزَاءِ

Jazakallaho ahsanal jaza.

May Allah reward you the best.

This is the most common form of “thank you.” It is said after receiving any kind of favor.

بَارَكَ اللَّهُ فِي أَهْلِكَ وَمَالِكَ

Barakallaho fee ahleka wa maleka.

May Allah bless your family and wealth.

You say this to someone who gives you a gift, a prize or money.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ

Alhamdo lillah

All praise belongs to Allah.

يَرْحَمُكَ اللَّهُ

Yerhamo komullaho.

May Allah be merciful to you.

يَهْدِيكُمْ اللَّهُ

Yahdeekomullaho.

May He guide you.

These three prayers are used after a person sneezes. The person who has sneezed should say the first one after sneezing. If anyone hears him/her, they should reply with the second one. The person who sneezed then says the third prayer.

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْأَعْلَى

Subhana Rabbe yal Aa'la.

Glory to my Lord the most High.

This said is said when in prostration during salaah; when you hear the first verse of Chapter Al Aa'la of the Holy Qur'an recited; and whenever Heaven or Hell are mentioned.

سَجَدَ لَكَ رُوحِي وَجَنَانِي

Sajada laka roohi wa janaani.

My spirit and heart prostrate for You.

Some verses of the Holy Qur'an require prostration after their recitation. No ablution is required, and in whatever position or wherever you are, say Allaho akbar and prostrate. Recite subhana Rabbe yal Aa'la three times followed by this prayer. Then lift your head saying Allaho akbar.

إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

Inna lillahe wa inna ilaihe raajeoon.

Surely we belong to Allah and to Him we return.

We say this on hearing of the death of someone. It is also said when trying to find something you have lost, and upon hearing any bad news.

أَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِكَافٍ عَبْدَهُ

Alaisallaho bekaafin abdohu.

Is Allah not sufficient for His servant?

These words of the Holy Qur'an were revealed to the Promised Messiah (peace be on him) when he was grieving over the death of his father. He had these words inscribed on a ring, and Ahmadi Muslims like to follow this tradition.

صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

Sallaho alaihe wa sallum.

Peace and blessings of Allah be on him.

Whenever you hear the name of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) mentioned, you should say this blessing aloud.

عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام

Alaiaihissalaam.

Peace be on him.

This should be said after mention of the name of any prophet of God.

رَضِيَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ / عَنْهَا

Razi Allaho ta'ala anho/anha.

May Allah be pleased with him/her.

These blessings are said after the mention of the names of the companions of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) or of the Promised Messiah (peace be on him).

رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ

Rahmatullahe alaihe.

May Allah have mercy on him.

This is said when referring to Khalifas of the Promised Messiah who are not his companions, and to saints of Islam.

Chapter 6: Islamic Viewpoint on Contemporary Issues

This chapter is intended to address the Islamic position on primary issues undermining the confidence and moral values of today's society. American society is daily confronted with personal or media accounts of drug abuse, violence, poverty and so on. Muslims, and especially new Muslims, must understand the Islamic teachings and attitudes about these subjects in order to better preserve their faith and morality.

The topics discussed in this chapter include substance and drug abuse, economic problems, racial issues, homosexuality, abuse of children and women, and family and social pressures that you may encounter if you are a new convert.

SUBSTANCE AND ALCOHOL ABUSE

The abuse of drugs and alcohol is one of the most phenomenal problems facing American society. In spite of the government spending huge amounts on the “drug war,” young people are losing their lives and dreams to drugs. Such a thing as the “drug culture” has emerged, and drugs have become the major cause of gang warfare. Alcohol, long having been an integral part of American social life, has wrecked homes and caused countless deaths in car accidents. Government efforts to curb teenage drinking and drunk driving have had little success. For the addict

involved with drugs and alcohol, there seems to be no end in sight.

The Islamic injunction concerning intoxicants, that is the complete forbidding of drugs and alcohol, seems idealistic for American society. Yet it is the only solution. Allah commands Muslims in the Holy Qur'an:

"O ye who believe! wine and the game of chance... are only an abomination of Satan's handiwork. So shun each one of them that you may prosper. Satan seeks only to create enmity and hatred among you by means of wine and games of chance, and to keep you back from the remembrance of Allah and from Prayer..." (5:91-92)

The Arabic word "*al-khamr*" is used in this verse which means anything that intoxicates or alters the mind. Thus, all forms of intoxicants are forbidden. The verse clearly explains the problems created by the use of intoxicants; first, they lead to hatred and enmity amongst people, causing murder, violence, immoral behavior etc.; and secondly they lead people away from Allah and His religion. Allah wants the believers to keep their minds pure and clean, so that they worship Him fully. A Muslim may not offer prayers (*salaat*) when he is not in full possession of his senses, even if that is caused by excessive emotion or a state of sleep. Certainly, a mind that is intoxicated is not able to focus on Allah.

Finally, it is important to note that drugs and alcohol are used as a means of escape from overwhelming difficulties and responsibilities. The attitude of one who has truly embraced the teachings of Islam cannot be compatible with this state of despair.

A true Muslim places his reliance on Allah for the relief of hardship. When the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) proclaimed Allah's commandment concerning intoxicants, his followers broke their pots and jugs of wine until the streets flowed with it. This is the example for the new convert to Islam. Some *hadith* of the Holy Prophet about intoxicants are:

1. If a large amount of anything causes intoxication, (even) a small amount of it is forbidden.
2. An undutiful son, a gambler, one who casts up what he is given, and one who is addicted to wine will not enter paradise.
3. Tariq bin Suwaid asked the Holy Prophet about wine and he forbade him. When he told him that he used it only as medicine, the Holy Prophet replied, "It is not a medicine, but is a disease."

Islam understands that it may not be easy for a person to break away from addiction, so it does not exclude or discourage the use of outside resources, such as counseling or rehabilitation. But the most potent tool is prayer and begging Allah's mercy.

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

There is no question that the world's economic condition today is complex and far-reaching. It includes such issues as government and economy, poverty, welfare, homelessness and labor. This section looks at the Islamic viewpoint on welfare and labor specifically with regard to a Muslim's personal attitude

towards wealth.

In America today, poverty and homelessness have continued to increase. These problems are often compounded by unsuccessful government programs and by drug and alcohol abuse. The welfare system, set up to help the poor and needy, is at present perhaps the most dysfunctional of government programs. Welfare has become a cyclical problem creating several generations of dependents. In many cases, it is more profitable for a recipient to stay on welfare than to take a job at minimum wages. Perhaps the greatest loss is that of personal dignity and control of one's life.

Islam takes care of such problems by dignifying labor and teaching a believer to rely on Allah for his needs. Poverty and need are timeless conditions, and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) gave clear teachings on begging and on charity. Begging or asking for food and money without repayment was the means by which the poor survived at the time of the Prophet. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) disapproved of begging, and only allowed it under three circumstances: if one was in severe poverty, when one owed enormous debt, or when one did not have the means to pay blood-money. He did not allow begging by a rich person or by one who "has strength and is sound in limb." He said:

"He who begs from people when he has a sufficiency will come on the Day of Resurrection with his begging showing itself as scrapes, scratching and lacerations on his face."

Islam encourages empowerment of the individual, so that he may take control of his circumstances as far as he is able, and leave

the rest to Allah. The Holy Prophet also said:

“It is better for one of you to take his rope, bring a load of firewood on his back and sell it, God thereby preserving his self-respect, than that he should beg from people whether they give him anything or refuse him.”

He also referred to the rough hands of a laborer as the hands God loves. Self-reliance is only part of a Muslim's thinking because it is always coupled with reliance on Allah. There are countless examples of Allah answering prayers concerning financial hardship when there seemed no other way.

One of Allah's blessings and a solution for economic disparity is the institution of *Zakaat* (see Chapter 1). *Zakaat* is a tax on the wealth of a Muslim which is distributed to the poor. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

“Take alms out of their wealth, so that thou mayest cleanse them and purify them thereby...” (9:103)

Thus Islam has made the giving of charity a purification for those with wealth and a means by which the wealthy may achieve nearness to Allah. In addition, the giving of charity provides for those in poverty. Muslims have been instructed to give charity on many occasions, such as the birth of a child, or on *Eid*, so that they may receive Allah's blessings. Even those who have very little are encouraged to give charity, be it food, clothes or labor. Wonderful examples of generosity are found in the lives of the Holy Prophet and his family, who themselves lived lives of hardship.

Islam teaches Muslims to take care of their relatives who may be less fortunate than themselves, thus encouraging the distribution of wealth. The Holy Qur'an says:

“They ask thee what they shall spend. Say, “Whatever of good and abundant wealth you spend should be for parents and near relatives and orphans and the needy and the wayfarer. And whatever good you do, surely Allah knows it perfectly well.” (2: 216)

In addition, the Holy Prophet has said:

“Your charity to others is certainly misplaced if you have a near relative to deserve it.”

And

“Giving charity to the poor hath the reward of one charity; but that given to kindred hath two rewards; one, the reward of charity, the other, the reward of helping relations.”

Thus, the Islamic system of charity is a good substitute for the welfare programs existing today.

RACE RELATIONS AND EQUALITY OF MANKIND

Muslims believe that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was sent as “a Mercy for all the worlds,” and that he brought a final religion for all humanity. As already mentioned in Chapter 1, one of the fundamental teachings of Islam and one which every Muslim cultivates in his heart is that of brotherhood and equality of human beings.

However, when you look at the world today, brotherhood and love between human beings is rarely seen. All over the world there is fighting and hatred, not only between different races and religions, but also between people of the same nationality and even the same faith. In America, racism is ever prevalent. Very little progress has been made towards harmony and understanding between the races. It is therefore the responsibility of Muslims, especially new Muslims, to abandon all prejudices towards others, develop a love for all humanity and uphold the special quality of brotherhood among Muslims.

The Islamic concept of equality is one that challenges the Western idea that equality means everyone should be the same. Rather, Allah says in the Holy Qur'an that He has created many different kinds of people in order to promote diversity and progress. All mankind is spiritually equal in the sight of God, but cannot possibly be physically equal or the same.

Allah says:

"O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female; and We have made you tribes and sub-tribes that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable amongst you in the sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous among you. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware." (Holy Qur'an, 49:14).

The verse clearly shows that all created beings come from the same source and thus are equal in the sight of God. The worth of a man is not judged by the color of his skin, his wealth, rank or social status, his descent or pedigree, but by his moral goodness

and the way he fulfills his duty to God and mankind. Allah divided humanity into tribes, nations and races to give them better knowledge of each other and to benefit from one another's characteristics and qualities.

Islam therefore totally rejects racism in any shape or form. Racism in this society is seen as prejudice against people of different color, race, nationality, religion, economic status and class. It expresses itself as name-calling, arrogance, hostility and violence between races. Islam not only lays down the doctrine of equality, but also addresses this type of racist behavior. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

"O ye who believe! let not one people deride another people, haply they may be better than they; nor let one group of women deride other women, haply they may be better than they. And do not defame your people or call one another by nicknames. It is an evil thing to be called by bad name after having believed; and those who repent not, such are wrongdoers." (48:12)

While other religions also teach equality and love for humanity, Islam is unique in that it requires physical expression of brotherhood. In the daily *salaat* or prayer, Muslims must stand shoulder to shoulder, indifferent to the status or color of the person next to them. There is no greater physical example of equality than the *Haj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) when all Muslims wear the same dress and circuit the *Kaabah* (House of Allah) in unison.

In daily life, Muslims should show openness and affection to

each other by greeting each other with the salutation of “peace be with you,” and by following the example of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). Among his *hadith* are:

*“If you shake hands with one another rancor will depart,
and if you make presents to one another and love one
another, malice will depart.”*

And

*“You should provide food and greet both those you know
and those you do not know.”*

If you are a new convert to the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, or have come into contact with it, you have probably already experienced the international character of the Movement. This is most strikingly seen at the Annual Gatherings (*Jalsas*), and also in local communities. Through Ahmadiyyat, Islam has spread to 148 countries of the world. Many Ahmadis in the United States have had the chance to meet their brothers and sisters from Africa, Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Germany and elsewhere. In addition there are numerous interracial and international marriages within the Ahmadiyya Movement. This atmosphere of cultural diversity bears testimony to the doctrine of equality in Islam as well as to the truth of Ahmadiyyat as the renaissance of Islam.

HOMOSEXUALITY

Homosexuality is a delicate and controversial subject

prevalent in today's society. You may be wondering about the Islamic position on homosexuality in the face of radical gay activism versus fundamentalist Christian teachings. Islam considers same-sex marriages to be invalid, thus all homosexual activity is extra-marital. As you have already read in Chapter 3, Islam forbids all sexual activity outside of marriage. Therefore, homosexual acts are considered to be sin. More specifically, Islam forbids "lewdness" between men and men, women and women, and men and women who are not married to each other. (See Holy Qur'an, 4:16-17). In addition, numerous *hadith* of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) condemn sodomy as hateful in the sight of God. This position against homosexuality supports the Islamic teaching of chastity and of the sanctity of sex within marriage. In general, it is consistent with a Muslim's goal of always seeking his or herself and spiritual development and leaving aside those things which attract the lower, baser side of human beings' nature.

As a new convert to Islam, you may have questions about gay rights and the fight for equality, and you may wonder whether discrimination against gays because of their sexual preference is right or wrong. It is important to point out that gay activists are seeking rights on the same grounds as African-Americans, women and other minorities; namely that their sexual preference is as innate as a person's skin color or gender. As this is not so, African-Americans, women and others should be wary of joining with gay activists in their political fight because their rights are not due on the same grounds.

ABUSE OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

It is a sad fact of life that you can pick up any newspaper today, and find accounts of wife abuse and crimes against children. It seems that the greatest and saddest loss in the march towards “progress” has been the safety and upbringing of children. The list of crimes perpetrated against children is horrendous, from neglect to kidnaping to sexual abuse. While the average person is not an abuser or molester of children, more and more children are suffering neglect, as careers and material gain have taken priority over devotion to family. Children are left alone at home for hours, or treated as objects in custody battles between divorcing parents. Worse still, many newborn children are either abandoned or killed by desperate parents. A society in which such actions are common cannot claim to have made much progress from the pre-Islamic days when Arabs were burying their baby daughters alive.

Islam not only champions human rights and the rights of women, but it fervently teaches protection and love for children. Allah says in the Holy Qur’an:

“... and slay not your children for fear of poverty – it is We who provide for you and them . . . ” (6:152)

This verse has been interpreted to mean the slaying of both born and unborn children for the fear of poverty. In this verse, Allah protects the child’s right to life, and enjoins the parents to place their trust in Allah. Islam teaches that children are a blessing, and their proper rearing is a means of gaining Allah’s

pleasure. It is no wonder that wherever there is a Muslim gathering, you will always see children with their parents.

One of the significant differences between Islam and Christianity is over the nature of children at birth. While Christianity teaches that children are born into sin, Muslims believe that every child is born completely innocent and pure. Thus Islam takes the responsibility for its spiritual condition away from the newborn child and places it on the parents. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) emphasized that Allah's reward is great for parents who look after the moral and spiritual needs of their children. Mothers are given the primary responsibility for caring for children.

Islam provides complete guidance for the upbringing of children in the Holy Qur'an and the *hadith*. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) said:

"Do not curse a child for when you curse, angels add: Let it be like that, and like that it becomes... Address a child politely and courteously, for a child is a great mimic. If you address it rudely, it will return the compliment in kind. Do not lie to a child nor be peevish or arrogant with it. It will certainly imitate you."

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) loved children and was a great champion of orphans. The Holy Qur'an says:

"And they ask thee concerning the orphans. Say, promotion of their welfare is an act of great goodness."

(2:221)

Thus, the Holy Prophet spoke often for the protection and generous treatment of orphans. The Promised Messiah (peace be on him) also demonstrated love and respect for children and instructed Ahmadis never to strike their children anywhere on their face, and to pray for them fervently. The Second *Khalifa* of the Promised Messiah has given detailed instructions for the proper upbringing of Ahmadi children in his book, “Way of the Seekers.”

In Islam, children are seen as a source of great joy as well as the prized future of the *Jamaat* or community. Thus in most Muslim societies, mothers stay home and devote the major part of their time and energy to their children. However, the reality for Muslim parents rearing children in a society focused on careers and the necessity of earning a living may be a little different. But based on the enormous challenge of rearing a child with a strong Muslim identity in a Western society, Muslim women must consider the long-term effects of placing a small child in the care of others while working. They should try, within their means, to be with their own children and ensure their nurturing, their strength of character and their Islamic upbringing, even if this may mean material sacrifice.

The treatment of wives has been discussed in Chapter 3, and you are already aware of the respect and equality that Allah has given to Muslim women. Islam does not permit the abuse of women in any form. The Holy Qur’an tells Muslims to “consort with them (their wives) in kindness,” and to find qualities in them that are pleasing. A common misconception exists in the West

that Muslim men are permitted to beat their wives whenever they please. The Holy Qur'an says:

"...And as for those on whose part you fear disobedience, admonish them, and keep away from their beds and chastise them." (4:35)

This verse means that if a wife is seriously disobedient to her husband, he should try and convince her of her fault. If that fails, he should cease to have conjugal relations with her (limited to a period of four months). Only in very extreme circumstances is he allowed to chastise her. Even then, according to the *hadith*, he may not injure her in any way.

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) repeatedly emphasized kind treatment of wives, saying:

"To treat a wife tenderly and put a morsel in her mouth is charitable."

And

"The more civil and the kinder is a Muslim to his wife, the more perfect of faith he is; fear Allah with reference to two meek beings, woman and orphans."

SOCIAL AND FAMILY PRESSURES

One of the most difficult things a new convert faces is relating to friends, family and lifestyle he or she knew before accepting Islam. The belief in your heart is very strong, yet there are many difficult questions to resolve because you still have the same

parents and family and work at the same place or see your old friends. There will be many judgement calls and decisions about how you will live an Islamic lifestyle in this Western society.

Concerning social pressure and friends you had when you accepted Islam, you should consider what kind of lifestyle your friends have, and what social activities you engaged in with them. Muslims should follow the Islamic teaching of *hijab/purdah*, refrain from alcohol and give up all those things which are inconsistent with the moral goals of a Muslim. This is not to say that all non-Muslim friends are immoral and non-religious. Muslims should be open, compassionate and friendly to everyone. However, Allah stresses the importance of choosing believers as your true friends. The Holy Qur'an advises that Muslims should not prefer non-Muslim friends as very close, intimate friends to Muslim friends. Allah says:

"Let not the believers take disbelievers for friends in preference to believers— and whoever does that has no connection with Allah—except that you cautiously guard against them..... " (3:29)

And

"O ye who believe! take not those for friends who make a jest and sport of your religion..." (5:58)

Instead, Allah says, when choosing your friends:

"And help one another in righteousness and piety; but help not one another in sin and transgression." (5:3)

Thus, it is better to choose friends based upon their compatibility with the moral and spiritual goals of the Islamic way of life.

The question of family pressure is more difficult because Islam places great emphasis on proper treatment of blood relations. In many cases, a new convert's parents and family may have great difficulty in accepting her new religion. It may be a source of pain and conflict for all concerned. While a new convert must always maintain her identity as a Muslim, it is important not to sever family ties. The Holy Qur'an refers often to the importance of kind treatment of parents and relatives. Allah says:

"Thy Lord has commanded that ye worship none but Him, and that ye show kindness to parents. If one or both of them attain old age with thee, never say to them as much as "ugh," nor reproach them, but always address them with kindly speech. And lower to them the wing of humility out of tenderness and say, 'My Lord, have mercy on them even as they nourished me when I was a little child.'" (17:24-25)

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) spoke emphatically against disobedience to parents, except in the matter of *shirk* (associating partners with Allah). The *hadith* mentions often that the undutiful child will be among those who will not enter Paradise. There are many *hadith* concerning acts of kindness to parents and Allah's reward for committing them.

The limit past which you are permitted to disobey your

parents is the same limit as prescribed for disobedience to the government of the country in which you live: that is, in the event that you are asked to go against or give up your belief in Islam. Through your prayers and kindness, your family may eventually come to see you as a new and better person who has chosen Allah's path.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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See appendix for additional references.

Chapter 7: The Worldwide Ahmadiyya Movement

Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam (or Ahmadiyya Muslim Association) is the name given to the vast worldwide community of Ahmadi Muslims. This chapter provides information on the establishment of the community, the conditions of initiation, the Khilafat, and the organization and activities of the Community. The chapter also contains information about the financial sacrifices made by the community members.

THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT

The International Ahmadiyya Movement or Jamaat (which means group or community) was founded by the Promised Messiah, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, in 1889. He was directed by Divine revelation to lay the foundation of a community of his followers by inviting them into a covenant of spiritual allegiance to him. Hazrat Ahmad disclosed this revelation in December 1888, and on January 12, 1889 he announced conditions of initiation (Bai'at) into the Movement (see next section).

In March 1889 Hazrat Ahmad issued a leaflet in which he stated:

“God desires to found a community of the faithful to manifest His Glory and Power. He will make the Community grow and prosper, to establish the love of God, righteousness, purity, piety, peace and goodwill among men. This shall be a group of persons devoted to God. He shall strengthen them with His own spirit, and bless them and purify them. He shall multiply them exceedingly as He has promised. Thousands of truthful people shall join His ranks. He shall Himself look after them and make the Community grow, so much so that its numbers and progress shall amaze the world. The Community shall be a lighthouse so high as to illumine the four corners of the world. The members thereof shall serve as models of Islamic blessings. My true followers shall excel every other people. There shall always rise among them, till the Judgement Day, personages who will be the chosen ones of God in every respect. So has the Almighty decreed. He does as He wills.”

The first formal initiation took place on March 23, 1889, and thus the Ahmadiyya Movement was begun.

The name Ahmadiyya was given to the Community by the Promised Messiah to commemorate the name of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), who has the two names, Ahmad and Muhammad. As the Promised Messiah's mission was to carry on the work of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) under his second name Ahmad, his followers are called Ahmadi Muslims. Ahmadi Muslims are sometimes wrongly called Qadianis or

Mirzais.

Today, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is found in 148 countries of the world and is vigorously pursuing its goal to unite the world under one spiritual banner. The Jamaat's rapid rate of growth, in spite of constant and often severe persecution by its opponents, testifies to the fulfillment of the Divine Plan. With an international membership of more than 10 million, the Jamaat is active in propagation of true Islam and service to humanity. It has built more than 4,000 mosques and tablighi marakaz (missions) throughout the world, opened clinics and schools globally, and translated the Holy Qur'an into more than 50 languages. The original Headquarters of the Community are in Qadian, India, the birthplace of the Promised Messiah. After the division of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan, the Headquarters moved to Rabwah, Pakistan.

The Ahmadiyya Jamaat is a spiritual organization. With only a small staff of missionaries, the Jamaat's activities and projects are carried out by volunteers who sacrifice their time, skills, wealth and property for the sake of Allah.

CONDITIONS OF BAI'AT (INITIATION)

For those who wish to join the fold of Islam and become an Ahmadi Muslim, the Promised Messiah established 10 conditions. To join the Community, one must agree to these conditions and sign a form of allegiance to the current Successor of the Promised Messiah. The conditions are:

1. The initiate shall solemnly promise that he/she shall

abstain from Shirk (association of a partner with God) right up to the day of his/her death.

2. That he/she shall keep away from falsehood, fornication, adultery, trespasses of the eye, debauchery, dissipation, cruelty, dishonesty, mischief and rebellion; and will not permit himself/herself to be carried away by passions, however strong they may be.
3. That he/she shall regularly offer the five daily prayers in accordance with the commandments of God and the Holy Prophet; and shall try his/her best to be regular in offering the Tahajjud (predawn supererogatory prayers) and invoking Darood(blessings) on the Holy Prophet; that he/she shall make it his/her daily routine to ask forgiveness for his/her sins, to remember the bounties of God and to praise and glorify Him.
4. That under the impulse of any passions, he/she shall cause no harm whatsoever to the creatures of Allah in general, and Muslims in particular, neither by his/her tongue nor by his/her hands nor by any other means.
5. That he/she shall remain faithful to God in all circumstances of life, in sorrow and happiness, adversity and prosperity, in felicity and trials; and shall in all conditions remain resigned to the decree of Allah and keep himself/herself ready to face all kinds of indignities and sufferings in His way and shall never turn away from it at the onslaught of any misfortune;

on the contrary, he/she shall march forward.

6. That he/she shall refrain from following un-Islamic customs and lustful inclinations, and shall completely submit himself/herself to the authority of the Holy Qur'an; and shall make the Word of God and the Sayings of the Holy Prophet the guiding principles in every walk of his/her life.
7. That he/she shall entirely give up pride and vanity and shall pass all his/her life in lowliness, humbleness, cheerfulness, forbearance and meekness.
8. That he/she shall hold faith, the honor of faith, and the cause of Islam dearer to him/her than his/her life, wealth, honor, children and all other dear ones.
9. That he/she shall keep himself/herself occupied in the service of God's creatures, for His sake only; and shall endeavor to benefit mankind to the best of his/her God-given abilities and powers.
10. That he/she shall enter into a bond of brotherhood with this humble servant of God, pledging obedience to me in everything good, for the sake of Allah, and remain faithful to it till the day of his/her death; that he/she shall exert such a high devotion in the observance of this bond as is not to be found in any other worldly relationship and connections demanding devoted dutifulness.

KHILAFAT AHMADIYYA

Khalifa means “one who comes after,” as a deputy, to fulfill the mission of that Prophet assigned by God Almighty. The subject is explained in Chapter 1. The Khilafate Rashida (the Righteous Khilafat) was established by Almighty God after the demise of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), when Allah appointed Hazrat Abu Bakr (peace be on him) to be the first successor. After many centuries, Muslims lost the blessings of Khilafat. Upon the death of the Promised Messiah, the institution of Khilafat was restored.

The Promised Messiah (peace and blessings be on him) said:

“Allah’s Divine Power is manifested twice. I appeared from God as a manifestation; and after me there shall come other persons who will be the second manifestation of Divine Power....

.....And the coming of that manifestation would be better for you because it would be everlasting, of which the link shall not break until the end of the world. And the second manifestation cannot come except after I am gone. But when I go away, Allah shall send the second manifestation for you and it shall stay with you for ever.....” (Al-Wasiyyat).

The Ahmadiyya Khilafat is that second manifestation and Allah has assured Ahmadi Muslims that this Khilafat will endure to the end of time. Khilafat provides unity, security and progress

for the Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya. No other sect in Islam has such a strong leadership, nor enjoys such unity and devotion among its followers.

STATUS OF THE KHALIFA

The Khalifatul Masih(Successor to the Promised Messiah) is the Supreme Head of the Ahmadiyya Community. He is elected to office by the Electoral College that was established for this purpose. However, Ahmadi Muslims firmly believe that it is Allah who selects the Khalifa, as He did in the Khilafate Rashida; for whenever an election of the Khalifa occurs, the hearts and minds of the electors are all turned towards the same person. This belief further increases the sense of peace and security that the Khalifa provides for the Jamaat. When a Khalifa has been elected, every man, woman and child of the Community must render complete and utter obedience to him, and reaffirm their Bai'at to him.

The presence of the Khalifa is a great blessing from Allah for the Jamaat. He is the spiritual leader and the spiritual father of every Ahmadi, and the beacon of light towards which every member looks for guidance. Whenever a Khalifa makes a scheme or plan for the Community, he does so with Divine guidance and assistance. He is concerned for the welfare of every member of the community and he prays for every member of the community. When faced with illness or problems, Ahmadis often write to the Khalifa for prayers, and immediately it seems that their burden becomes lighter.

THE AHMADIYYA KHALIFAS

Since 1908, the year of the Promised Messiah's death, there have been four Khalifas. Allah bestowed His special favors on each one, and the Jamaat has flourished and prospered during each Khilafat. A brief summary of their achievements is given below:

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I

Hazrat Maulvi Nooruddeen Sahib was the first successor to the Promised Messiah (peace be on him). He was a most favorite companion of the Promised Messiah, and was the first to enter into Bai'at. Possessing vast religious knowledge, Hazrat Nooruddeen had a very deep understanding of the Holy Qur'an. He was an eminent physician and served in the court of the Rajah (prince) of Kashmir. As soon as he heard of Hazrat Ahmad's claim, he traveled to Qadian to visit him. On seeing Hazrat Ahmad, he immediately offered to enter into a covenant with him.

During his Khilafat from 1908 to 1914, Hazrat Nooruddeen established various Jamaat institutions including the Treasury, schools and publications. He also vigorously upheld the institution of Khilafat against a small minority element which wanted to undermine the Khilafat.

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II

One of the prophecies revealed to the Promised Messiah by God was that He would bestow on him a son who would be a sign of Allah's Mercy, Power, Grace and Beneficence, and through

whom the message of Islam and Ahmadiyyat would be carried to the ends of the earth. This prophecy was fulfilled in the person of Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad, his eldest son, who became the second Khalifa in 1914 at the age of 25. He was also known as Hazrat Musleh Mauood, the Promised Son.

His achievements as Khalifa for 52 years are too numerous to mention here, but one of his most important accomplishments was the organization and establishment of foreign missions around the world, including the United States in 1920. He established Tahrike Jadid and Waqfe Jadid Schemes to fund that missionary work, and the Jamia Ahmadiyya School to train missionaries.

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II organized the administrative body, the Sadr Anjuman, of the Jamaat into various departments and created auxiliary organizations for men, women and children. Several publications were begun under his guidance and he himself wrote numerous books. Through Divine guidance, he wrote a 10-volume commentary on the Holy Qur'an in Urdu, known as Tafsir-e-Kabir, and also wrote a short commentary, the Tafsir-e-Saghir. Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II was also a great orator, and many of his speeches would continue for hours.

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih III

Upon the death of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II, Hazrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad was elected to be the third Khalifa in 1965. The eldest son of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II, he was highly educated, having obtained his Master's Degree at Oxford University. He was well versed in religious knowledge, having memorized the

entire Holy Qur'an at the age of thirteen.

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih III launched two major schemes: the Fazle-Umar Foundation, which funded the continuation of projects begun by his father; and the Nusrat Jehan Scheme to organize long-term humanitarian efforts in West Africa such as schools and hospitals. Through this scheme, 17 medical centers and 15 schools were set up.

During his Khilafat, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih III encouraged students to pursue higher education, and established numerous educational institutes. Administrative buildings and mosques were built during his Khilafat, including Masjid Aqsa in Rabwah, and the Basharat Mosque in Spain. It was at the occasion of laying the foundation stone of Basharat Mosque that he announced the popular Ahmadiyya motto:

“Love for all; Hatred for none.”

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV

Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad became Khalifa upon the death of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih III in June 1982 and is the present Supreme Head of the Jamaat. As was his predecessor, he is also a grandson of the Promised Messiah and a son of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II. However, such a relationship is not a requirement of Khilafat.

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (Hazoor) is leading the Jamaat to new levels of unity, zeal and progress. More than 1500 new mosques and missions have been established in the last decade; the Holy Qur'an has been translated into more than 50 languages and the Jamaat is growing rapidly. One of the greatest

achievements of his Khilafat is the development of Muslim Television Ahmadiyya (MTA). In 1992 on the occasion of the inauguration of Baitul-Islam Mosque, Canada, the Khalifa's Friday Sermon was broadcast to every continent of the world for the first time via live satellite transmission. In 1993, the first International Bai'at at Hazoor's hand took place when 204,308 persons simultaneously accepted Ahmadiyyat via live satellite transmission. This number swelled to 418,206 the following year. This year (1995) the number was 840,000.

Today Hazoor has developed MTA to such an extent that it is broadcast daily and a growing number of Ahmadis are viewing it. In his broadcasts to the world, he emphasizes every Ahmadi Muslim's duty to serve Allah and humanity by being devoted Dai-Ilallah (callers to God). May Allah strengthen the hands of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV and protect the Ahmadiyya Khilafat. Ameen.

ORGANIZATION OF THE JAMAAT

As the Supreme Head of the Jamaat, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih directs and guides the Jamaat's activities and all institutions and associations within the Jamaat are under him.

Ahmadiyya Communities exist in 148 countries throughout the world, and each is organized in the same way. Hazrat Khalifatul Masih has appointed an Ameer for each country, who is the Administrative Head of the Jamaat in that country. The Ameer heads the National Aamila or Executive Body, which consists of National Secretaries of various departments. These

departments include: finance (Maal); education and religious training (Talin-o-tarbiyyat); preaching activities (Tabligh); social services (Khidmate-Khalq); properties (Jaidad); matrimonial affairs (Rishta-nata); public relations (Ta'allaqaate-aama); census (Tajneed); wills (Wasaya) and the department of General Secretary. The National Aamila directs the activities of the Jamaat at the local (muqaami) level of that country. A local Jamaat may be set up with the permission of the Ameer where three or more subscription paying members reside. Each Jamaat elects a local President and a local executive body.

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II established auxiliary organizations within the Jamaat, which function at national and local levels. These are:

Majlis Ansarullah: male members of the Jamaat above 40 years of age are its members. In each country it is headed by a president known as Sadr Majlis Ansarullah who is answerable to Hazrat Khalifatul Masih.

Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya: this is the organization of Ahmadiyya male youth from 15 to 40 years. In each country its president is known as Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya who is answerable to Hazrat Khalifatul Masih. It has a sub-organization for boys age 7 to 15 called Majlis Atfalul Ahmadiyya.

Lajna Imaillah: this is the organization of Ahmadi women 15 years and above, headed by a president in each country known as Sadr Lajna Imaillah who is answerable to Hazrat Khalifatul Masih. Lajna has a sub-organization for girls of 7 to 15 years known as Nasiratul Ahmadiyya.

Other central Ahmadiyya Organizations include Sadr

Anjuman Ahmadiyya, Tahrike Jadid Ahmadiyya and Waqfe Jadid Ahmadiyya. For more information on these and other institutions of the Jamaat, please see titles given at the end of the chapter.

LAJNA IMAILLAH

Lajna Imaillah means “maidservants of Allah.” The organization was founded in 1922 by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II. He defined its primary objectives as:

1. To educate Ahmadi women and reinforce the necessity of living their lives according to Islamic teachings.
2. To prepare them to serve their fellow beings lovingly and to preach Islam in the best manner possible.
3. To encourage them to instruct, guide and train their children in the precept and practices of Islam.
4. To promote in Ahmadi women such a spirit of sacrifice as to keep them ever ready for offering their lives, properties and their children in the cause of Islam and for the preservation of the Ahmadiyya Khilafat. There are currently more than 700 branches of Lajna in various parts of the world. These branches, by promoting cooperation and teamwork among their members, are trying to realize Lajna’s objectives throughout the world. One of Lajna’s important achievements is its contribution towards building

mosques. The Fazl Mosque in London, the Mubarak Mosque in Holland and the Nusrat Jehan Mosque in Denmark were built exclusively by donations by Lajna.

The United States Lajna Imaillah is one of the most active and presently consists of 40 local chapters. Its activities include preaching, social work, Islamic education of its members and the holding of jalsas and ijtemas for training women and girls. For more information on Lajna in your area, contact your local Jamaat.

THE AHMADIYYA DONATION SYSTEM

One of the surest ways for a Muslim to attain blessings from Allah is to spend in the way of Allah. The Holy Qur'an says:

"Never shall you attain to righteousness unless you spend out of that which you love; and whatever you spend, Allah surely knows it well." (3:93).

To achieve righteousness, a believer must make sacrifices out of what he loves best, whether it is money, property or possessions. Allah has also promised believers that their sacrifices are rewarded in this life also, for He says in the Holy Qur'an:

"Say, Surely my Lord enlarges the provision for such of His Servants as He pleases and straitens it for such as He pleases. And whatever you spend, He will replace it, and He is the Best of Providers." (34:40)

The Ahmadiyya Movement is a spiritual Organization which

is not involved in any kind of worldly business. Its activities depend solely on the donations of its members. This concept of sacrifice was introduced by the Promised Messiah himself. Every program of the Jamaat, including Muslim Television Ahmadiyya, construction of mosques, publishing of Islamic literature, is funded by the financial sacrifices of Ahmadi Muslims. Each time the Khalifatul Masih has announced a new scheme, men, women, and children have rushed forward with donations of money, jewelry, and other possessions so that they may be blessed by Allah.

VARIOUS CATEGORIES OF DONATIONS

Contributions made to the Jamaat by its members are called chanda and fall into different categories. Some chandas are compulsory and some are voluntary. Some chandas have a fixed rate, and some have no limit; it is up to the donor to give what he can. The giving of voluntary chanda is the source of great blessings, but there is no compulsion in giving. Those members who are facing financial hardship may give compulsory chandas at a reduced rate but only after obtaining the permission of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih.

The following lists the compulsory chandas of which the major voluntary ones are: Zakaat, Fitrana, Chanda Aam, Wassiyat, Jalsa Salana, Tahrike Jadid, Waqfe Jadid, Auxiliary Organization Membership, Sadqa, Eid Fund, and Publications. A brief explanation and significance of these donations is given below:

1. Zakaat

Zakaat is one of the five pillars of Islam. In the Holy Qur'an, God has repeatedly urged the believers to pay Zakaat for the purification of their souls. Those who have capital in the form of cash, jewelry, bullion not used for one full year are required to pay at the rate of one fortieth ($1/40$) of the value of the goods.

2. Fitrana

Fitrana is a compulsory donation made at the end of the Holy month of Ramadhan to be distributed to the poor. This donation is based on the sunnah of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him. The suggested rate is \$4.00 per person and should be paid before Eid.

3. Chanda Aam (Regular subscription)

This basic donation was established by the Promised Messiah himself and is compulsory for every earning member of the Ahmadiyya community. The payment ratio is $1/16$ of one's income from all sources after taxes and compulsory insurance. The Chanda Aam year is from 1st July to June 30th.

4. Wassiyat(Will)

Wassiyat is the making of a will in the favor of the Community, pledging $1/10$ to $1/3$ of one's total assets to the Jamaat at the time of one's death. A person who has pledged Wassiyat is known as a Moosi and must also donate $1/10$ to $1/3$ of his earnings yearly instead of chanda aam. This scheme was set up by the Promised Messiah under Divine Revelation. This is a

voluntary pledge and carries other conditions with it.

5. Jalsa Salana (Annual Gathering)

This donation is also compulsory and is used exclusively for the expenses of the Annual Convention held at the national level. The prescribed rate is 1/120th of one's annual income from all sources.

6. Tahrike Jadid

This scheme is responsible for the opening of new Missions and construction of mosques throughout the world. It was launched by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II in 1932, who urged members to lead a simple life, cut down even on their meals and donate as much as possible for the propagation of Islam in countries outside of India and Pakistan. A little as a cent may be donated but the donor must resolve not only to pay it regularly but to try and increase it even by a cent every year. The suggested rate is 1/5th of one's monthly income once a year, which is from 1st November to October 31st.

7. Waqfe Jadid

This voluntary scheme was also initiated by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II, and was primarily introduced to train and pay missionaries for the propagation of Islam and for the training of new converts in the Indian subcontinent. It has now been extended to cover Africa and Russia. The suggested rate is \$2.00 minimum once a year from each member of the family. The Waqfe Jadid year is from January 1st to December 31st.

8. Auxiliary Organization Membership

Membership in the Auxiliary Organizations (Ansar, Khuddam and Lajna) is compulsory and therefore their membership dues are also compulsory. Lajna dues are fixed at \$30.00 annually, and Nasirat dues are \$7.00 annually. Senior citizens and students may pay a lower rate. Lajna members must also pay National/Regional Ijtema fund at \$15.00 annually. The Lajna year is from July 1st to June 30th of the next year.

9. Sadqa

Sadqa is voluntary donation given by believers for the poor and needy. God has commanded Muslims to ward off calamities and privations by helping those who are less fortunate and require assistance. It can be made at any time and in any amount.

10. Eid Fund

This voluntary donation was started by the Promised Messiah and is to ensure that the poor and needy are able to have a joyful Eid.

11. Publications

Every chanda paying member of the Jamaat in the United States receives the Ahmadiyya Gazette which contains news of Jamaat activities, speeches, articles and other pertinent information. Members are urged to subscribe to the Review of Religions, an international English journal established by the Promised Messiah; the Muslim Sunrise, a US-based journal and the Ayesha magazine, a Lajna Imaillah publication.

Other voluntary chandas include: the National Mosque Fund for construction of mosques; Satellite Fund which supports Muslim Television Ahmadiyya; Africa -India Fund; Darul-Yatama for the caring of orphans; Qadian Guest House, and other Funds that are initiated as the need arises.

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See appendix for additional references.

Appendix: References and Resources

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These books are publications of the Ahmadiyya Movement and should be available from your local Jamaat or from the National Headquarters.