

Dr Basharat Ahmad

Compiled by Dr. Zahid Aziz

Dr Basharat Ahmad (1876-1943) was a leading Islamic intellectual, scholar and author of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, noted particularly for his fresh and inspiring expositions of the Holy Quran. He was born on 3rd October 1876 at Bagsoor in Dharamsala Cantonment, District Kagra, India. His grandfather, Shaikh Ahmad Ali Faruqi, was a tutor of Persian and Urdu to British Army officers in Dharamsala Cantonment. It was there that Basharat Ahmad spent his childhood until his grandfather, after retirement, moved to Sialkot. He received his school and college education at Sialkot in the Scotch Mission High School and Murray College, respectively. His grandfather was keen for him to become a medical doctor. When Basharat Ahmad obtained admission to the Medical College in Lahore (later known as King Edward Medical College), a prestigious medical institution, his grandfather also moved to Lahore to provide all possible care and attention to his education.

After qualifying as a doctor, his first appointment was in East Africa where he stayed for one and a half years during the late 1890s. He then returned to India and worked first as Medical Officer and then as incharge of hospitals in major cities of the Punjab such as Gujrat, Rawalpindi and Mianwali. When he retired from government service in Ludhiana in 1931, he was offered the high post of Chief Medical Officer by the state of Malerkotla, but on the suggestion of the late Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Ali he decided to settle down in Lahore to serve the cause of Islam with his vast knowledge of Islam, deep understanding of the Quran, and true comprehension of the claims and teachings of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

From his youth Dr Basharat Ahmad loved studying the Holy Quran and gaining deeper knowledge of it. He had applied his own analytical thinking and reasoning to his study of the Holy Quran, Hadith and other literature on Islam. For almost thirty years he wrote extensively in the Urdu organ of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, the *Paigham-i Sulh*, on a wide range of issues relating to the Quran, Islam and the Ahmadiyya Movement. He replied to questions posed to him in a most cogent and authoritative manner which not only satisfied the questioner but also showed the rationality and deep Divine wisdom underlying the Last Word of Allah. A large number of such articles relating to Islam were later compiled by his elder son, Mr. Mumtaz Ahmad Faruqi, in book form and published in three volumes under the title *Basharat-i Ahmadiyya*. Some of his lengthy articles had also been published as separate booklets during his lifetime.

Dr Basharat Ahmad was devoted to studying, teaching, explaining and expounding the Holy Quran. During his government service and even after retirement he regularly delivered *Dars-i Quran* in the afternoons. In his exposition he brought out deep, new truths from the Quran to shed light both on age-old questions as well as new issues that have arisen in the modern age. In his explanations he made reference to current events, trends, thinking, scientific knowledge and discoveries, and showed how the Holy Quran sheds light on them, so that we can benefit from their good aspects and reject the bad ones. His exposition was eloquent, impressive, convincing and relevant to the present

circumstances, and it attracted Muslims of all persuasions and sections and even non-Muslims.

Towards the closing years of his life, he wrote an extremely enlightened commentary of the 30th and then the 27th part of the Holy Quran, entitled *Anwarul Quran* (The Blessings of the Quran). The commentary of Part 30 has been rendered into English by our learned Brother Imam Kalamazad Mohammed and published by the Muslim Literary Trust, Trinidad and Tobago. This translation was very much appreciated by members in Trinidad and Guyana. Due to requests from people in Suriname, Holland and Indonesia, who were also greatly impressed by it, it has now been translated into the Dutch and Indonesian languages.

Dr Basharat Ahmad has related in an inspiring article the events of his joining the Ahmadiyya Movement. In 1901 his eldest son became critically ill and doctors lost all hope of his survival. By that time Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, had become well-known for his spiritual eminence. Dr Basharat Ahmad specially went to Qadian to request him to pray for the child. He describes how he met Hazrat Mirza and became totally captivated by his humble, hospitable manner and spiritual aura. When Hazrat Mirza answered some questions that he asked him for spiritual guidance, Dr Basharat Ahmad began to feel as if Hazrat Mirza's replies were entering deep into his heart, removing the doubts within, and purifying his soul. He felt inwardly compelled to take the pledge there and then to join the Movement. It was only at the end of their talk that Dr Basharat Ahmad remembered the original purpose of his visit, to request Hazrat Mirza for prayers for his son! He made the request and Hazrat Mirza prayed for the child. Dr Basharat Ahmad later learnt, to his astonishment, that the child had started to recover the same day that Hazrat Mirza had prayed for him, when everyone had become completely despondent, and by the third day he had fully recovered. This extraordinary acceptance of prayer further intensified Dr Basharat Ahmad's faith in the truth of Hazrat Mirza.

With the passage of time Dr Basharat Ahmad became convinced that he must write a comprehensive, authentic biography of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, covering his life and works, dealing particularly with the unique services to Islam of this outstanding Islamic revivalist of the age. He compiled and published his monumental research work in three volumes entitled *Mujaddid-i Azam* (The Great Reformer). It is widely considered, by friend and foe, to be the most authentic biography and a true depiction of the yeoman's service done by the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement. The first two volumes, published in 1939 and 1940 respectively, consist of the Founder's life history, and also contain synopsis of each of his major Urdu, Arabic and Persian works. The third volume deals with his Islamic philosophy, thought, exposition of Islamic concepts, defence of Islam in reply to non-Muslim critics and opponents, and his mission of carrying the message of Islam to the West. This volume was published shortly after the death of the author.

In 1914 there had taken place a split in the Ahmadiyya Movement because Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, eldest son of the Founder, was propagating the wrong doctrine

that the Founder was a prophet and all those Muslims who did not accept him were disbelievers and outside the pale of Islam. Dr Basharat Ahmad, from that time onwards, wrote numerous articles and booklets refuting these false doctrines and clarifying the true nature of the claim and status of the holy Founder.

Besides being a well-known scholar of the Quran and an eminent member of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, he earned name and fame as a medical doctor for his proficiency, honesty, integrity and above all his kindness and benevolence towards his patients.

In January 1943 Dr Basharat Ahmad went to Bombay to stay with his younger son Mr. Naseer Ahmad Faruqui who was Collector of Bombay (a post in the Indian Civil Service) at that time. He wanted to impart his knowledge of the Quran to his son who was equally a keen student of the Quran. Being ill already, he died there peacefully on 21 April 1943. His body was brought to Lahore by train, where *janaza* prayers were offered for him at the Ahmadiyya Buildings Mosque on 23rd April and he was then buried at the Ahmadiyya Cemetery in the Miani Sahib Graveyard, Lahore.