

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



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THE FIRST ISLAMIC MISSION IN THE U.K. ESTABLISHED 1913 C.E. AS THE WOKING MUSLIM MISSION

*Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore (U.K.)*

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## Next Meeting

Assalamu alaikum

Venue: *Dar-us-Salaam*

Date: Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2004

Time: 3 pm

Speaker: Mrs Nazra Ali

Please make every effort to attend and be on time.

## Regular Activities

**Dars-i Quran:** Every Friday at 2:30 pm.

**Meeting of the Executive:** First Sunday of every month at 2 pm.

**Meeting of the Jamaat:** First Sunday of every month at 3 pm.

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## News

### USA

**Safia Begum** passed away in

اِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَاِنَّا اِلَيْهِ رٰجِعُونَ

Hayward California, USA. The deceased was sister of the late Brigadier Abdul Latif (*Shaheed*), Chaudry Abdul Karim (Okara, Pakistan), Chaudry Abdul Sattar (Hayward California), Mrs. Qudsia Masud Akhtar and Mrs. Zakiyya Zafar Abdullah.

May her Soul rest in eternal peace and may Allah grant patience to the bereaved family to bear this great loss.

### Holland

**Mr. Santoe knighted by the Dutch government.**

The following message was e-mailed by the President of the Rotterdam Jamaat AAII to Hazrat Ameer, Dr. Abdul Karim Saeed Pasha Sahib at Lahore on [akspasha@aaii.org](mailto:akspasha@aaii.org) and [centralanjuman@yahoo.com](mailto:centralanjuman@yahoo.com) addresses, after he had already departed for the Pacific Region:-

“Dear Hazrat Ameer Sahib,

Assalaam alaikum W.R.W.B.

Availing myself as President of the Rotterdam Islamic Jamaat AAII, I am very pleased to inform you that on the eve of Holland's traditional Queen's Day on 30th of April, Mr. Santoe, Central Anjuman's Representative for Europe, was ordained with the RIDDER IN DE ORDE VAN ORANJE NASSAU (Knighthood of the order of the House of Orange Nassau being the name of the Royal family).

On behalf of Her Majesty the Queen brother Santoe was personally decorated by Mr. Ivo van Opstelten, the Queen's Major of Rotterdam. During a stately session in the Town

hall's Ridderzaal (the hall of knights) his merits were solemnly summed up. Besides his official duties in the government services of Surinam and the Netherlands for more than 45 years, special mention was made to his life long voluntary dedication for communal efforts particularly his services for the Ahmadiyyat in its most widest sense. *Al hamdulilla.*

Not only as president of the Rotterdam Jamaat for which brother Santoe had laid the foundation some 30 years ago, as its first president, but also, as the the Guardian in this whole event, I am extremely proud to announce this to you in the hope that the Central Anjuman as well as our worldwide Movement will share this pride and joy with us here in Holland.

Meanwhile I remain,

Sincerely yours.

President RIV AAII”

We congratulate Mr Santoe on this great honour for the services he has rendered to his country and the recognition of these services by the government of Holland.

### A Brief Life Sketch of Mr Santoe

Abdul Samad Santoe, Central Anjuman's (AAL) representative for the European zone as from 1984 Born in Nickeri-Surinam on 03-08-1938, received primary and secondary education in the capital city of Paramaribo where he also graduated as bachelor of Law at the Surinam University.

Married to Sara Ilahibaks they are blessed with four children and four grandchildren. In 1956 Mr. Santoe was appointed civil servant at the Ministry of Economics Affairs in Paramaribo, lastly as Deputy Head of the Trade Department and in 1972 he left for Holland with his family for a sabbatical leave of 14 months. During his service for the Surinam Government, he was assigned an extensive study programme at the Ministry of Economic Affairs in the Hague for one year. In 1970 Mr. Santoe was also granted a training programme for international trade and export promotion in New Delhi by the Indian Government.

Besides his official duties in Surinam he was already at an early age involved in voluntary activities for sports and cultural organizations. First as Vice-president and during the final two years he was president of the AMOS- a general Muslim social and cultural organization-open for all sections of the Muslim communities in Surinam.

While in Holland the family decided to establish here and Mr. Santoe took a position at the Rotterdam Erasmus University Library lastly as Chief Administrator where he retired in 2001.

Mr. Santoe's merital records for Ahmadiyyat in Holland:

\* 1976. As a founding member and first president of the Rotterdam Islamic Jamaat (AII) he later played a key role in the forming of a Federation of Ahmadiyya jamaats in Holland. First as its Secretary and later as Vice-President.

\* 1984. Mr. Santoe is appointed as European Zonal Representative of

AAL by the then Ameer the late Hazrat Dr. Saeed Ahmad Khan.

\* 1987. He is also at the base of the foundation of another Ahmadiyya (Lahore) jamaat in the southern part of the city of Rotterdam and also became its president for a temporary period.

\* 2001. Retires from Erasmus University.

\* At present Mr. Santoe is, besides his duties as Central Anjuman's Representative, also active in the affairs of the Berlin Mosque as well as training programmes, lectures and publications within the Ahmadiyya community in Holland.

29th April 2004: Mr. Abdul Santoe is awarded the distinguished order of the Knighthood of the House of Orange being the Royal Family of the Netherlands. On behalf of H.M the Queen the Order was awarded by the Queen's Mayor of Rotterdam Mr. Ivo van Opstelten solemnly summed up the merits of the ordained, most important of which is his incessant voluntry service for the communities started in Surinam and continued in Holland particularly for the Ahmadiyya Community in this country. On the occasion the Mayor praised Mr. Santoe's favourite maxim or motto: "ignorance is the fiercest enemy of man".

#### Correction

An error has been pointed out in 'Without Comment', which appeared in May's Bulletin. Uzbekistan is not a 'predominantly Christian country'. According to the information given in 'The World Fact Book', 88% of the population is Muslim (mostly Sunnis), only 9% are Eastern Orthodox, and 3% other religions. The country's president Islam Karimov is also a Muslim and not a Christian as described in the article.

#### Author's comment:

Thank you for pointing out this error. However, I believe that the main thrust of my argument, which was, that, Western powers support or oppose particular countries out of self interest and not some high moral principle, is, I believe, still valid.

### Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's contribution to Muslim Reformation

By

Shahid Aziz M.Sc

(Based on a Friday sermon)

A non-Ahmadi brother Muslim spoke to me the other day and said that when he asked an Ahmadi what did Mirza Ghulam Ahmad do, apart from splitting the already divided Muslim community further, the Ahmadi could not answer him. He went on to ask if creation of another sect was all that Mirza sahib did, then how can he be regarded as the *mujaddid* (reformer) of the 14th century, let alone the Messiah and the Mahdi, promised to the Muslims by the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

In this *khutba* I want to deal with the first question; for if we can establish Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's achievements, then his position and status are automatically confirmed. I cannot discuss here all of his achievements because of a lack of time. I leave aside his defence of Islam against the Hindu sects, Arya and Brahamo samaj and the Shudi Movement, for they are only of historical interest now. I will concentrate on the reforms he brought about which are still having an affect on the Muslim *Ummah*.

#### 1: Established Finality of Prophet unconditionally

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was the first Muslim to declare boldly that prophethood ended with the Holy Prophet Muhammad. He declared that the Holy Quran says: "Muhammad is the seal of the prophets". When asked to explain this verse, the Holy Prophet himself explained it in these words: "There is no prophet after me." This bars the coming not only of new prophets but also old ones. This is a bar to the second coming of Jesus son of Mary. No other Muslim has laid so much stress on the termination of prophethood with Muhammad Mustafa as did Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. He asked what words would

he use to describe himself, if Jesus reappears in this world. Would he not say: "I am Jesus son of Mary the prophet of Allah."? Would Muslims then not reject him because he was claiming to a prophet after the Holy Prophet (s)?

Some people say that when Jesus comes again, Allah would have taken away his prophethood. However, they do not support this by producing verses of the Holy Quran or the hadith. It is unfortunate that, to support an untenable proposition, our brothers tinker with the fundamental concepts of the Holy Quran. As a famous poet said:

"they do not change their views,  
"they change the Holy Quran."

## 2: Definition of a Muslim

The saddest aspect of the Muslim community life is declarations of heresy against each other. Leaders and scholars of each sect declare members of other sects to be heretics and outside the pale of Islam. They forbid all social and religious interaction between their followers and members of other Islamic sects. This led to violent clashes between, for example, Shias and Sunnis. It also made it difficult to define who is a Muslim.

When, in 1953, anti-Ahmadi agitation in Pakistan led to the breakdown of law order and martial law order had to be declared the government appointed a commission to look into the causes of the riots. This commission produced a report known as The Munir Report. In it the judges who headed the commission commented upon the difficulty of defining a Muslim. They said that if the definition of one sect is adopted, it makes followers of all other sects heretics. When in 1974 the anti-Ahmadi agitation rose again, some of our members said that the Pakistani parliament will not be able to define a Muslim and therefore we will not be declared heretics. I remember commenting at the time that what the parliament will do is simply to call us heretics rather than define a Muslim.

One of the greatest achievements of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was that he reverted to the definition of a Muslim given by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). **It is that any one who declares his faith in the Unity of Godhead and messengership and prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muhammad is to be regarded as a Muslim.** He pointed out that the Holy Prophet himself had instructed his generals that it was not their duty to enter into people's hearts to see why they were declaring their faith in this formula. The simple declaration is enough to establish a person as a Muslim. **The Holy Prophet went so far as to say that the person who calls another reciter of the Kalima a heretic is the one who goes out of fold of Islam.**

There is a famous incident when a Shia Muslim came to Hazrat Mirza sahib and told him that he wanted to join the Ahmadiyah jamaat but he had some conditions. First, he said that, while praying, he would not fold his arms. Hazrat Mirza sahib said that that was fine. Then he said that he would give zakaat in accordance with the Fiqh Jaffariya (Shia jurisprudence). Hazrat Mirza did not object to that either. The Shia brother went through a list and at each point Hazrat sahib replied that is fine. Eventually, he asked Hazrat sahib if there is anything, which is a part of the Shia doctrine, that he will be required to give up. Hazrat sahib told him that the only thing he has to give up is the denigration of the companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

In some places we see that Muslims are reverting to this. At the time of elections in Pakistan a couple of years ago the religious parties formed an alliance. What was that alliance based on? Shia brothers kept to their way of salaah, zakaat, azan etc. They did not give up those things, nor did Sunni brothers. They united on what is common between Muslims and that is the Kalima—there is only one God, Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger and Prophet, which is what Hazrat Mirza

sahib had proposed more than a hundred years earlier.

## 3: Allah is a living God

There was a widespread belief held among the Muslims that Allah no longer spoke to man. This negates one of the most important aspects of the attributes of the Divine Being - that His attributes are immutable.

**Allah was, He is and He shall forever be present with all His Majesty and attributes. He does not grow old. He does not lose His faculties. His attributes never decline. But if we were to say that He no longer speaks, it means that Allah has lost the use of one of His faculties.** The same thing happens to humans. As we grow old our eyesight, our hearing, our strength wane. It takes humans a few score years for this to happen and it may have taken Allah thousands of years but its not the period of time that is important. What is important is the principle. Even if just one attribute of Allah declines even slightly, he is no longer ever-lasting. Then, the only difference between a human and Allah is the period over which they lose their respective faculties.

In fact, this puts in doubt existence of God. Let us take an example. We stand outside a closed room and we are not able to enter it. We knock on the door, we call out: "Is there any body in the room?" But there is no reply. What conclusion, other than that the room is empty, will we draw?

Some people say look at nature, its complexity proves that there must be a God. This is true but there is a great deal of difference between saying : "there must be a God." and "there is a God." If we depend on nature only to prove the existence of God then as science unravels its mysteries, our faith in God will dissipate. A hundred years ago man could not fly, live under water, go into space, conduct heart transplants, create clones etc. Now we can. This would then negate the argument for existence of God.

**The only argument for the**

**existence of God which cannot be negated is that He speaks. When you call on Him, He answers you.**

#### **4: Scientific Proof of Existence of God**

These days there is much emphasis on scientific proof. This means that there is objective proof for the proposition you are putting forward and people, in different countries and at different times, can repeat the experiments you conducted to prove the proposition you are putting forward.

Existence of God in accordance with this criteria can only be proved if God speaks to man. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad issued this challenge to the whole world that if people go and live with him, he will prove to them that God exists by proving that God spoke to him.

Many times people took up this challenge and went to him and asked him to prove that God exists and speaks to him. Once incident comes to mind. One day while Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad sat with his friends and companions, some Hindus came and challenged him to show them a sign instantly to prove that God exists and speaks to him. He prayed to Allah and then informed his guests that in the very next post there will be a letter from such a such person with this amount of money as a donation. The postman came but there was no such letter from the person whose name Hazrat sahib had given. The Hindu friends sat there mocking Hazrat sahib and as they were about to leave the postman returned. He apologised to Hazrat sahib for missing out one letter. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad opened the envelope to find the exact amount of donation in it together with a letter. Hazrat sahib gave the letter to his Hindu friends. The text showed that Hazrat Mirza sahib had no knowledge of this person writing to him and sending him money. Also, remember Hazrat sahib lived in a village without any means of communication except an unpaved road. The nearest railway station was some fifteen miles away. This

experiment can be repeated by any one at any time. Sincerely pray to God and see whether He answers your prayers or not.

#### **5: Allah is superior to science**

Hazrat Mirza sahib had said that Jesus cannot come again because Prophethood has been terminated by Allah with the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The question then arose: What happened to Jesus? Hazrat Mirza sahib answered this by saying that Jesus had died because the Holy Quran says so. He did not say that Jesus had died because science says it is impossible for a human being to live for thousands of years.

This importance of this statement lies in the fact that at Hazrat Mirza sahib's time a group of Muslims had taken it upon themselves to justify the Holy Quran in the light of scientific discoveries and theories. They also said that Jesus was dead and will not come again. But, the reason they gave was that according to science it is impossible for a man to live to such long periods. This had happened once before when, after translating Greek philosophy into Arabic, a group of Muslims started to justify the Holy Quran in terms of Greek philosophy. Allah is Almighty. He can do whatever He chooses. However, if He cannot keep alive Jesus because science makes it impossible for a man to remain alive for thousands of years then, it is obvious that, science is more powerful.

This is a very important distinction to remember. Scientific theories have been proven to be wrong. If we have justified religion in terms of a scientific theory which is proven wrong, what happens to religion. This was indeed what happened to Hinduism. At the turn of the last century there was scientific theory which stated that space was full of a substance called Ether. This was based on the belief that just as sound needs a medium for its propagation and transmission, namely air; then light must need some medium as

well for its transmission. This was the substance named Ether. Hindu friends took up this theory and started pointing to verses of Vedas where, they said, an Ether-like substance was mentioned thousands of years ago. They argued that this proved the truth of the Hindu religion and its superiority over other belief systems. Some years later experiments showed that the theory that space was full Ether was wrong. The correct conclusion to be drawn, then, is that, the religion which was supported by this theory, or which supported this theory, is also wrong.

#### **6: Order of Islamic sources**

Another important point related to the death of Jesus was, that of the order in which Islamic sources are to be taken. Muslim scholars generally agreed that ascent of Jesus and his return cannot be proven from the Holy Quran. Indeed, they accepted that death of Jesus can be proven from the Holy Quran. However, the hadith, or sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad spoke of the Messiah's Second Coming. Scholars argued that as the hadith spoke of a Second Coming, the Holy Quran has to be interpreted in the light of the hadith.

This was dangerous because the Holy Quran is the Word of Allah whereas hadith is the word of man. Also, the revelation received by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) was written down immediately upon receipt and formed the Holy Quran.

This is not the case with hadith. Hadith consisted of what people said they had, or they thought they had, heard the Holy Prophet say. It is possible that a person misheard or misunderstood the Holy Prophet. They may not have understood the context of the conversation. Add to that the fact that hadith was not written down until about one hundred years after the demise of the Holy Prophet (s) and it can be seen that it is very dangerous to interpret the Holy Quran in the light of the hadith rather than the hadith in the light of the Holy Quran. It is this practice that has led to rituals and

customs amongst Muslims which are not mentioned in the Holy Quran such as stoning to death for adultery, just to name one such practice.

**Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad put the sources of Islam in their correct order; that is the Holy Quran first, followed by the hadith.**

#### **7: Exploded the Theory of Abrogation**

The practice of placing hadith first, and not the Quran, combined with a misinterpretation of a verse of the Holy Quran led to this very dangerous idea that some verses of the Holy Quran had been abrogated. It is said that the some verses which are in the Holy Quran are no longer effective (abrogation of affect) whereas as some Commandments which still carry force are not found in the Holy Quran because their recitation has been abrogated! Even Hazrat Shah Walli-ullah in *Al-Fauz al-kabir* (page 57) says: *“thus if all the differences are kept in view the number of abrogated verses exceeds 500; indeed if these differences are studied closely then it will be found that the number of abrogated verses is countless.”* Hazrat Shah Wali Ullah then discusses the concept of abrogation and some verses which are considered to be abrogated and comes to the conclusion: *“As is clear from the discussion above, for me abrogation of more than 5 verses is not proven . . .”* (p. 67).

Thus, even a man as great as Hazrat Shah Wali Ullah believed that five verses of the Holy Quran had been abrogated. **It was Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad who proved that none of the verses of the Holy Quran are abrogated and that it was a complete and consistent Book with perfect teaching.**

#### **8: Ijtihad (Exercise of Judgement)**

The four great imams of jurisprudence had expanded the application of Islamic law so that it could be applied to new and unfamiliar situations. They used reasoning, logic etc to do so. This is

known as *ijtihad*. However, later Muslims came to believe that, after the four great imams, the doors to *ijtihad* had been permanently closed. This stopped development of Islamic law, jurisprudence and system of justice and made it irrelevant to new problems that arose. Its consequence was that Muslims became backward, not forward, looking.

**Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad argued that the fact that Islam is a religion for all people for all time must mean that the door of *ijtihad* can never close. As new problems and situations arise Muslims must use judgement to deal with them, for if they do not, then Islam will increasingly become irrelevant to the needs of the people and society.**

#### **9: Jihad**

*Jihad* was, and it still is, thought of, by Muslims and non-Muslims alike, in terms of war waged for propagation of Islam. Hazrat Mirza sahib pointed out that this was wrong. Islam, unlike Judaism, does not preach that one should kill all opponents; but, unlike Christianity, it does not preach that we should surrender to tyranny. The Holy Quran tells us that submission to tyranny is worse than slaughter.

Islam teaches a middle course. It forbids aggressive war but it does allow war of self-defence, as well as taking up of arms to defend people's rights and liberty. He pointed out that the objective Islam sets out for us is not to grab political or military power but, in the first instance, to master our own selfish desires.

Hazrat Mirza sahib also pointed out that, in any case, Muslims did not have the physical means to wage any kind of a war. They lack money, education, facilities for the manufacture of arms and armaments etc. What was the sense of preaching jihad - in the sense of fighting, when for all practical purposes Muslims were unable to conduct it.

He went on to say that the age to

come was going to be of struggle of ideas and not so much of armaments. He implored Muslims to acquire modern knowledge, opening a school in Qadian for this purpose. He also stressed the need for Muslims to learn the art of propaganda for propagation of Islam. He wanted the Holy Quran translated into English and a detailed book on Islamic teaching to be written and distributed in the West. He started an English journal called “The Review of Religions” which was sent to libraries and newspapers in the UK and USA. He did this over one hundred years ago! Propagation, said Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, was the real jihad that every Muslim should be undertaking.

#### **11: Changed the debate on the truthfulness of Islam from defensive to offensive**

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad put forward a very simple and original idea for determining the truth of a religion. He said that both, the claims being put forward on behalf of a religion and the supporting arguments establishing such claims should come from the Divinely revealed book of that religion. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad pointed out that most claims advanced on behalf of religions, other than Islam, are not to be found in their scriptures. As time passed and society developed, the followers of these religions made up these claims to make the religion look acceptable to the people.

Islam stands out in that this is the only religion whose scripture itself advances all its claims, and the supporting arguments. Most scriptures do not even carry the name of their religion!

The organisers of the World Conference of Faiths in Lahore in 1886 C.E. invited followers of all religions to answer five questions about religion and they imposed the same condition on the participants - that every claim they make in answer to the five questions which have been

put forward, should come from their scriptures and not from any other source.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's reply was read out by Hazrat Maulana Abdul Karim of Sialkot. He had not even finished reading out the answer to the first question when the time ran out. However, Maulvi Mubarak Ali, a non-Ahmadi, who was to follow gave up his time so that Hazrat Mirza sahib's reply could continue. At 16:30 the proceedings for the day were to end and as it was the last day, the audience requested the president to continue until at least the answer to the first question was completed. It took another hour. People then implored the organisers to extend the conference for another day, so that they could hear Hazrat Mirza sahib's reply to the remaining 4 questions. This was agreed and the whole reply was read out over two days in seven and a half hours.

People of every religion and sect agreed that this was a most magnificent reply. Later, it was translated into English by Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Ali, under the heading "Teachings of Islam" and distributed in the Western world. Count Tolstoy, who some how acquired a copy of the English translation, wrote a letter to Hazrat Mirza sahib highly praising the lecture.

### **12: Tolerance of non-Muslim communities**

There are two aspects of the tolerance he preached. The first aspect is: should Muslims tolerate a non-Muslim government? **Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad stressed that, so long as they have the right to propagate Islam, Muslims should live as peaceful and loyal citizens of the government under whose protection they live.** He set an example of this. On one hand he preached that jihad, in the sense of fighting, against the British rulers of India was not allowed by Islam. On the other hand, he not only robustly defended Islam by attacking the

fundamentals of Christianity, he even invited Queen Victoria to embrace Islam, writing a book, *Tuhfa-i Qasariya* (A Present for the Empress), for this purpose. He told her to 'stop worshipping a dead human and return to the worship of the One Living God'.

The other aspect of this question is: how do Muslims deal with other communities. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad went so far as to advise Muslims that, if for the sake of inter-religious harmony, they have to give up a right because it offends some one else, they should do so. In this context, he wrote a booklet called *Paigham-i Sulah* (Message of Peace) in which he stressed that India will not be able to win freedom unless Hindus and Muslims learn to live together in peace. He made an offer to the Hindu community that Muslims will stop eating the flesh of the cow, which is holy to them, if in return they stop abusing the Prophet of Islam.

Hazrat Mirza sahib instituted many other reforms such as his efforts to eliminate social customs and practices in the Muslim community which wasted resources, for example, mourning the dead for 40 days and spending large sums on looking after guests who come for this purpose, or, wedding rituals which last weeks etc.

Here I have just given a brief description of some of the reforms he instituted. For those of you who prefer to read rather than watch Eastenders, I recommend Hazrat Dr. Basharat Ahmad biography in three volumes of Hazrat Mirza sahib. If not all three volumes I request you to read at least the third volume, which summarises Hazrat sahib's work and discusses the objective that he placed before his jamaat. My English speaking brothers and sisters don't have an excuse either because the third volume has been translated and published in English.

### **Reconciliation and Nation-Building with God**

*By Jallal-ud-Din*

Islam places great emphasis on the

necessity towards honesty and good relationship within any community. This must be practised with dignity. Reconciliation and reconstruction of strained relations is a dignified function and precursor to nation-building. Nation-building and reconciliation cannot be separated. Too often in society, whenever there is slight disagreement between persons, rupture of the relationship is feared first and foremost. Some of the most common causes of conflicts in a plural society are differences in religion, race, culture issues and uneven distribution of key resources. Freedom of religion is a liberal right and no religion has the right to steer the Government of the day according to that particular religion.

The universal salutation in Islam is "*Assalamu'alaikum*." It simply means "Peace be upon you." The reply for this salutation is "*Wailekumusalam*." It means "peace be upon you also." Either or both expressions may be graced with the additional words of "*Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatahu*" which means "and may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you." This is God's most simplistic way of nation-building, applicable to all communities.

When a Muslim gives this salutation of "*Assalamu'alaikum*" to another Muslim and the reply is given, then there should not be any doubt, that the respondent is a Muslim. This becomes the primary step in the foundation of nation-building. The expressions of peace are not different from the original Hebrew word "Shalom" which also means "peace be upon you." The expression "salam" is from the root word "Islam."

Islam, in fact, makes even this word an abode of nation-building for a true Muslim who makes his peace with his Lord; and lives at peace with his fellow man. To gracefully shower a person with "*Assalamu'alaikum*" – meaning "peace be upon you" becomes both the starting point and, an on-going catalyst, in striving for nation-building with God.

The peace in the next life is, in fact,

a continuation of the peace of mind, which a Muslim finds in this very life. This of course excludes deliberate political interference, in which, some people excel – as political trouble causers.

You may have noticed that Muslims have been the targets of aggression by some other ethnic groups. Some of these attacks on Muslims were known as “Ethnic cleansing” and documented with the United Nations.

However, Muslims are told always, to accept nation-building and reconciliation even in the middle of conflict, if the other party, expressly wanted peace and reconciliation.

The Holy Qur’an states at Chapter 8 verses 61-62:

*“And if they incline to peace, incline thou also to it, and trust in Allah. Surely He is the Hearer, the Knower.*

*“And if they intend to deceive thee, then surely Allah is sufficient for thee. He it is Who strengthened thee with His help and with the believers.”*

It should be noted that reconciliation is recommended even though the aggressors’ sincerity may be doubtful. This is God’s way of nation-building. History shows that the aggressors toward Islam disregarded their responsibility and violated their agreements.

Notwithstanding the aggressors’ frequent breaking of their promises, Muslims are ordered to make reconciliation with the other party, but not become the initiators of aggression. This is an essential function in nation-building with God.

With valuable resources in their possession, and with powerful weapons of mass destruction, some countries claim that they have the additional right of controlling the destinies of others to bring more and more of economic advantages to their own people. When the mightier countries carry out espionage against the weaker ones, the matter is quite acceptable yet if the other party carries out the same activity, the weaker ones are accused of

espionage and the beginning of conflicts.

Aggression in any one form or another is the very essence of the civilised states. The weak and the minority have no rights; the right belongs to only those who have the might, majority and the strength to command respect and attention. This mentality has been developed by many nations, resulting in states striving to out do the others in military might and armaments. Of course the result is deadly conflict between the different states. This is certainly not God’s way of nation-building.

The responsibility for this situation rests with the entirely materialistic concept of the state. Every state must necessarily be invested with power, with which it may stop aggression and protect the weak, dealing out fair justice to all. On the other hand, materialistic outlook of life has made man more unscrupulous in the use of power against fellow man, and in the advancement of the conquest of nature, the conquest of self, which alone checks on the tyranny of man against man, has been retarded and thrown to the background. The result is, that, the increased powers of the state, which must necessarily be exercised by individuals, are being used more for the enslavement and destruction of man than for his deliverance from tyranny and upholding the cause of truth and justice.

Although some countries have a very high percentage Muslims, the head of such a state must never regard himself as a representative of God on earth, but a representative of people the who had chosen him through a democratic process of election.

Persons of prominent religious standing are not prevented from state leadership. However, when such leaders make political decisions for the betterment and protection of that state, they are often accused of leading a religious war.

The peoples’ responsibility to the state is to respect its laws and obey its orders as long as they do not

involve disobedience to God and His prophets.

**Prophet Muhammad had always ordered his followers to take counsel whenever an important matter had to be decided, whether it was a matter of good governance of the country or that of religious significance. The two principles of democracy, the supremacy of the law and the taking of counsels in making new laws and leading other important affairs, were thus laid down by Prophet Muhammad himself. This is God’s way of nation-building.**

**As a matter of preventing conflicts, justice was declared to be the corner stone of the State which Prophet Muhammad founded; in dealing equitably, no distinction was to be made between friend and foe, between people whom one loved and those whom one hated.**

The Holy Qur’an states at Chapter 5 verse 8:

*“O you who believe! Be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice; and let not hatred of a people incite you not act equitably: act equitably, that is nearer to piety; and be careful of your duty to Allah, for Allah is aware of what you do.”*

The injunction to prevent the occurrence of conflict is given at many places in the Holy Qur’an. For example, the injunction at Chapter 4 verse 135 reads:

*“O you who believe! Be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allah even though it be against your own selves or your parents or near relatives – whether he be rich or poor, Allah has a better right over them both. So follow not your low desires least you deviate. And if you distort or turn away from truth, surely Allah is aware of what you do.”*

A word frequently confused with “peace” in Islam is “Jihad.”

A very great misconception prevails regarding “Jihad” in Islam. “War” and “Jihad” are not synonymous. The correct rendering is that Jihad signifies striving, or exerting oneself, and there is nothing in the word to indicate that this striving is to be

effected by the sword, or by any method of violence.

Jihad is of three kinds. The first is self-defence for survival against an aggressive enemy in a conflict against Islam; the second is against the devil's inspirations and the third is against oneself from doing wrong or committing sin.

Striving to propagate Islam must always be done peacefully in nation-building. This very presentation to you all is an example of Jihad, as I am striving to convey to you our expression of nation-building and reconciliation in Islam. Muslims are required by the Holy Qur'an to maintain peace and extend reconciliation at all times. Please note the following:

If the aggressor attacks, Muslims must retaliate in self-defence - for survival.

If the aggressor submits for peace, Muslims must make peace and reconcile.

If the aggressor is defeated, Muslims must stop their retaliation *ipso facto*.

The above rule is clearly given in the Holy Qur'an (the Ordinance of Muslims) at Chapter 2 verse 190:

"190 And fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you but be not aggressive. Surely Allah loves not the aggressors."

It is clear that Muslims were allowed to fight only in self-defence to preserve their existence, and Muslims are forbidden to be aggressive. The Holy Qur'an nowhere gives permission to start or enter on an unprovoked attack or war. Peaceful living is the Order for everyday.

Muslims are told to accept peace, nation-building and reconciliation in the middle of any conflict if the other party wanted peace. It should be further noted that peace and reconciliation are recommended even though the other party's sincerity may be doubtful. This was the practice of Prophet Muhammad during his lifetime.

Prophet Muhammad never initiated or led an attack but only defended with victory.

The element of conflict and reconciliation is not limited to self-defence only. Muslims are also required to respect and honour the places of worship of other non-Muslim groups.

The Holy Qur'an states at Chapter 22 verse 40 to save churches, synagogues and cloisters as well - in fact to practise perfect religious freedom to all:

*"Those who are driven from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allah. And if Allah did not repel some people by others, cloisters, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered, would have been pulled down. And surely Allah will help him who helps Him. Surely Allah is Strong, Mighty."*

In early Islamic history, all Muslim leaders were expressly ordered to respect all houses of worship, and even cloisters of monks along with their inmates. The Holy Qur'an in dealing with matters of conflict and reconciliation gives full liberty of conscience by stating that there is no compulsion in religion. That is God's way of nation-building.

This is given at Chapter 2 verse 256:

*"There is no compulsion in religion - the right way is clearly distinct from error. So whoever disbelieves in the devil and believes in Allah, he indeed lays hold on the firmest handle, which shall never break. And Allah is Hearing, Knowing."*

The above establishes the golden standard, that religious beliefs and practises are not decision matters for the Government of the day, but an independent matter between man and his God. It also extinguishes that flame of discontent causing conflicts - and need for reconciliation.

These are all recorded facts of administration by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the famous Battles of *Badar*, *Uhud* and *Tabuk*. The last of the major battles in the defence of Islam was *Tabuk*. In this battle Prophet Muhammad had a comparatively small group of just 30,000 against the entire army of the

Roman Empire, but when he found, on reaching the frontier, after a very tedious journey, that the Roman army decided to discontinue the attack, Prophet Muhammad ordered his men to return without defending against the Romans.

The principle of preventing conflict and, making reconciliation after a conflict, is laid down in the Holy Qur'an, that Muslims shall not be aggressive in commencing war.

It may be argued that there cannot be peace, nation-building and reconciliation when there are religious differences in the country. Minor differences cannot be a barrier to peace and nation-building. The only time differences become barrier to nation-building and reconciliation when there are orchestrated actions by leaders who vilify and denounce the beliefs of the faith of another. In many countries, some politicians are very good at vilification. That is certainly not God's way of nation-building.

Islam preaches that by using sense and reason, people can discover good or evil of anything from results it leads to. A country cannot have peace when another community inhibiting it attack and abuse community or religious leaders of another group. Two communities cannot live in harmony with each other when one or each of them speaks insultingly of the spiritual leaders of the other. Nation-building with God has to be mutually acceptable to all.

Every person has his feeling stirred when he hears his Prophet or religious founder insulted. We Muslims on our part never speak disrespectfully of the Prophets of other communities. Our belief is that 124,000-plus spiritual leaders, who lived among nations prior to Prophet Muhammad, were in their time Prophets of God and also as Ambassador of the Most High.

Building bridges of understanding between people of different communities is a reconciliation process in conflict management and an answer to peace from violence.

*(to be continued)*