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Islam's Great Opportunity

—
Will the Muslim Seize it?

BY

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IDEALS

1. Service of Islam.
2. Unity of Islam.
3. Defence and Propagation of Islam.

WORK

1. Establishing Islamic Missions.
2. Preparing Muslim Missionaries.
3. Translating Holy Quran.
4. Preparing Islamic Literature.

OUR BELIEFS

1. We believe in the finality of prophethood in Muhammad. In the words of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement "No prophet, old or new, will come after our Holy Prophet"; "The man who denies the finality of prophethood must be considered as having no faith in, and outside the pale of, Islam."

2. We believe the Holy Quran to be the final and perfect Book of God, no portion of which has ever been or shall ever be abrogated.

3. We look upon every one as a Muslim who professes faith in the *kalima*, *La ilah ill-Allah Muhammad ur Rasul ullah*, to whatever sect or school of thought in Islam he may belong.

4. We accept Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, as the Mujaddid of the 14th century, and we affirm that he never claimed to be a prophet, as he himself writes: "I lay no claim to prophethood, but claim only to be a *Muhaddath*" (a non-prophet to whom God speaks): "I am not a claimant to prophethood; on the other hand, I regard such a claimant as outside the pale of Islam;" "They have devised a lie against me who say that I claim to be a prophet."

Note:—The doctrines held by the Qadian section that the founder of the Movement is a prophet and that all non-Ahmadis are *kafirs* have been repeatedly refuted by us.

DEAR BROTHER IN ISLAM,

As salamu 'alaikum. A great and golden opportunity lies before Islam in India. This country has already proved to be the most fertile ground for Islam to flourish. The Muslim community in India is not only the largest in any other country in the world but also the most active in the propagation of Islam, the only community which at the present day is awake to the need of carrying the message of Islam to those countries of the West which it has not reached as yet. But an opportunity has now come to the very doors of the Indian Muslims, an opportunity of which history can afford but very few examples. It is to this that I wish to call your attention and request you to treat this matter as the most important in the life of Islam at the present day.

As I have said, the Muslims in India are the largest Muslim community in the world; they number eight crores. We have reached this number perhaps in about a thousand years, but there is before us the prospect of adding as many to our numbers, if we would make an effort worthy of the sons of Islam, in

the near future. As you are aware there are eight crores of "untouchables" in India, who were made to believe that they were Hindus but whom the Hindu religion never claimed as its sons. For thousands of years they have been content with their lot and have looked upon themselves as actually low-born and too defiled to inter-mingle with the other communities on a status of equality, but recently their eyes have been opened, and their leaders have now awakened to the need of taking their community out of the degradation in which the Hindu religion has placed them.

A Malabar Leader's Views.

It is now four years when a Malabar Thia leader, Mr. K. Sukumaran, B.A., gave vent to these feelings in a Malyalam weekly organ of the "untouchables," *Mithavadi* by name, and this article was published in the *Light* and also in tract form by this Anjuman. The following extracts from that article will show the strong feeling of the Depressed classes against Hinduism, in the Madras Presidency :

"In Hindu society there is a vast section who are derisively called Panchamas. The Thiya and many other castes down to those who are called Nayadees are counted among them. In country parts outside Malabar they are known as Parayas. The Parayas are numerous and are two or three times greater in number than the caste-Hindus....."

“That these Panchamas are included in the Hindu society is only a farce and a jugglery of the caste-Hindus wherewith they seek to hood-wink the authorities and make them believe that the Hindus, as a political section, are a majority community, while the Panchamas are really out of the pale of Hinduism. If, in fact, they are within its fold and are considered part and parcel of the Hindu community why, on earth, are they denied the right of entry into their places of worship? Nay, even the shadow of a Panchama is a pollution to them. They feel nothing of the sort at the approach of a Christian or a Moplah. It is only, when a Panchama draws near whom they consider to be within their community that they are polluted. It is indeed a wonder that those who do not see any defilement in the vicinity of a dog living upon the excreta of a Panchama, have the audacity to regard him as low and unequal and feel polluted at his approach. But the wonder of wonders is that these Panchamas themselves hold the same view about their own selves as that held by the caste-Hindus and look upon themselves as foul and low-born. It is a pity that we are not ashamed to allow others, who are only mortals as we are, breathing the same air and eating the some food as we do, to call upon us to keep aloof from the public paths and roads. We are simply victimized to this long-standing and heinous custom.

* * * * *

“ However much a Thiya be wise and respectable,

to them he is only an outcast to be kept aloof. It is high time for the Thiyas to shake off a creed which is nothing less than an impediment to their welfare, freedom and convenience as a self-respecting community and to join the folds of another. Indeed, we are on the threshold of a crisis when we are to shun the Hindu religion as we would a cruel satan and to run away from it as if it were a place of malignant epidemic—aye to shun this creed of Hinduism which owing to the hideous customs resulting from the existence of a thousand and one classes and castes within its fold, has become the hot-bed of all that is absurd, mean, odious, nasty, loathsome and good for nothing. A Panchama who has a grain of self-respect in him must not remain in its fold. We must make a bid for our faith and that too very soon ”

More important than this resolve to leave the fold of Hinduism, and even more outspoken, is Mr. Sukumaran's statement as to the faith which he advises his community to adopt. He takes the three great religions of the world, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, one by one, and briefly but most pointedly shows which of these religions can give to the untouchables a status of equality with the other communities living in India. He takes Buddhism first as being the religion so closely allied to Hinduism and says :

Buddhism

“ A decision to change our faith brings us face to face with the question what religion are we to accept ?

Truly speaking, in points of a high ideal and good precepts Buddhism, no doubt, stands foremost in the world. There was a time when Buddhism spread all over India and the kings and princes did homage to it. Yet, with all that, India was not a fit place for it to thrive,—a fact borne out by history. When we consider the fact that the image of Buddha, who himself had preached against idol-worship, is being worshipped everyday, we can imagine how deep-rooted has the propensity for the form of worship become in the minds of the people. Such a creed the Panchamas do not want indeed. Besides, the Buddhists in India are comparatively very few and if, therefore, they accept Buddhism for their faith they do not get a requisite numerical strength. Apart from this consideration, the fact remains that the religion of Buddha has, in very many respects, a close resemblance to Hinduism, and hence on the strength of the maxim that it is safe to leave off that water too which flows to the mud, we are to reject it."

Christianity

He considers Christianity then, but knowing the condition of Indian converts to Christianity, he says that it is equally unsuited to remedy the evil for which the untouchables are seeking a remedy in the adoption of a new religion. He says :

" I, for one, can never lend support to the view of Mr. C. V. Kunju Raman that Christianity is the sole

retreat for the several lakhs of Thiyas residing in Malabar. Among the Syrians, in Travancore, who pride themselves in professing the creed of Christ, caste distinction is maintained even to-day. There are many castes within that community such as Cheruma-Christian, Ezzhava or Thiya-Christian, Nair Christian, etc. Not only is there no inter-marriage between the various classes among them but also they are seldom found to intermingle with each other. For a people who are disgusted with the caste-system, to adopt a religion wherein the caste distinctions are still preserved intact, is foolishness, pure and simple. Moreover, in India the Christians have no numerical strength as a separate community, let alone the fact that there exist among them several sections such as the Syrian, the indigenous Christian and the Eurasian whose social position does not allow them to be in wholesome contact with each other. For these reasons the Thiyas cannot, by their adoption of the Christian faith, expect to achieve anything calculated to alleviate their present position. ”

Islam

The case of Islam is taken last :

“ Now, in my opinion, the religion of Islam alone is the centre of hope for the Panchamas. It is agreed everywhere that, of all creeds, Islam is the one among the followers of which unity and brotherliness have-

reached so high a stage. I know that many misunderstandings about Islam prevail among the Malayalees. But it is a sheer folly to conclude that, because some rebel Moplahs of Malabar are untidy, cruel and foolish, so the entire Mussalmans of India are of the same type..... There are good people among the votaries of every religion as well as bad. But there is no other community, as the Mussalmans, amongst whom the sense of brotherly feeling has developed so strong, and therefore if the Panchamas wish to remove the stain on their name and put an end to the regular throwing, from among others, of derisive epithets and libels on them, if they want to keep up their prestige, honour and self-respect untainted, if they want to have their rights and privileges maintained safe and secure, if they want to walk in the streets as dignified men with their heads erect, I would say a hundred thousand times and more that they must, with all becoming courtesy, adopt Islam and Islam alone as their religion. If Panchamas accept Islam they will not only have gained the numerical strength and power but the majority of the Indians too would be Muslims.... My firm belief is, that, if India wants Swaraj or Home Rule, the Hindu population which is the source of all that is vulgar and absurd, must decrease in number and the number of Musalmans must increase. I swear now that if India gets Swaraj to-day I will become a Musalman to-morrow."

Four years have passed since Mr. Sukumaran, with

a true leader's insight, gave expression to these views. During these four years, Mr. Gandhi, and with him the whole of Hindu India, turned attention to the question of the upliftment of the untouchables. Mr. Gandhi gave up all political work and devoted himself entirely to a campaign against untouchability, touring throughout the country and giving a lead to the Hindus by his personal example. Mr. Gandhi's hold on the Hindu mind is undoubtedly very great, but far greater is the hold of religion, and the Hindu mind, true to its religion and its sacred books, has revolted at the idea of throwing away its religious obligations at the bidding of a man. And the result of Mr. Gandhi's four years' work is the Depressed classes' resolve under the lead of Dr. Ambedkar to give up the Hindu religion.

Dr. Ambedkar's Statement.

It was on the 14th October at Yeola in the Nasik District that in a mass meeting of about ten thousand untouchables, including many leaders, and with Dr. Ambedkar in the chair, a resolution was adopted for complete severance of the Depressed classes from the Hindu fold, and embracing of any other religion guaranteeing them equal status and treatment with other members of the faith. When news of the adoption of this resolution reached Mr. Gandhi, he thought it to be unbelievable and ascribed the resolution to anger on the part of Dr. Ambedkar at the treatment which was meted out to the Depressed classes, and

urged Dr. Ambedkar "to assuage his wrath and reconsider the position and examine his ancestral religion on its own merits," to which the following reply was given by Dr. Ambedkar.

"What religion we shall belong to, we have not decided; what ways and means we shall adopt, we have not thought out; but we have decided one thing and that after due deliberation and with deep conviction, namely, that the Hindu religion is not good for us.

"Inequality is the very basis of it and its ethics are such that the Depressed classes can never acquire their full manhood in it.

"Let none think that I have done this in a hurry or as a matter of wrath against the treatment meted out to the Depressed classes at Kanitha village or at any other place. It is a deeply deliberated decision.

"I agree with Mr. Gandhi that religion is necessary, but I do not agree that a man must have his ancestral religion if he finds that religion repugnant to his notions of the sort of religion he needs as a standard for the regulation of his own conduct and as a source of inspiration for his advancement and well-being. I have made up my mind to change my religion. I do not care if the masses do not come. It is for them to decide. If they feel it is good, they will follow me, but on the contrary if they feel that it is not, they will not follow my example."

Dr. Ambedkar occupies the same position of leadership among the Depressed classes as Mr. Gandhi among the Hindus. And his lead is being followed by the Depressed classes throughout the country. Resolutions are coming in from all sides that the Depressed classes will follow him. The young men have even made a bon-fire of the Hindu sacred books. A funeral pyre was prepared, into which sacred books of the Hindus were thrown, to the accompaniment of funeral orations.

The Punjab is generally considered to be the only province, in the whole of India, where Dr. Ambedkar has not got sufficient influence, but even the Punjab Depressed classes have definitely stated that they are with Dr. Ambedkar. A meeting of Harijans, under the auspices of the Punjab Provincial Depressed Classes Association was held in Lahore on Monday evening, 25th November 1935, in which resolutions were passed :

(a) stating that Dr. Ambedkar was the sole leader of the Depressed classes of India ;

(b) assuring Dr. Ambedkar of full support by the Punjab Depressed classes ; and

(c) condemning those Hindus who stated that untouchability did not exist in the Punjab.

Here is an opportunity for Islam, an opportunity, too, which comes very rarely. Eight crores of people are leaving the fold of Hinduism because that religion

is unable to give them a status of equality with the caste Hindus; in fact, it is responsible for reducing them to the worst condition of slavery that has ever existed in the world. But what is more, they have come to a final decision to adopt another religion and their first requirement, in the new religion, is that it should do away with the inferiority complex which Hinduism has given them as a heritage and inspire in them a true consciousness of human dignity which should bring them on to a level of equality with other communities. Dr. Ambedkar may not say what religion he or the Depressed classes will adopt, but the fact is too clear that Islam is the only religion which can solve the problem of untouchability. Mr. Sukumaran has discussed the chances of the only other religions to which the Depressed classes can turn their attention, and he comes to the undeniable conclusion that neither Buddhism, nor Christianity can give them the brotherhood which they need, and that it is only in Islam that they can find a remedy for their ills. Eight crores of people are thus practically waiting at the threshold of Islam; will the Muslims lend them a helping-hand to draw them in, and avail themselves of this grand opportunity?

Before this question is answered, its full implication must be realized. You cannot offer Islam to eight crores of people, by far the great majority of whom is uneducated, and living in villages, by drafting a resolution or a telegram to Dr. Ambedkar inviting

him to accept Islam, and having the same published in papers, as if the Depressed classes were only waiting for an order from this or that quarter as to which religion they should accept. They do not know what Islam is; even the educated Hindus in the cities are ignorant of Islam. The question is, how to enlighten eight crores of people speaking a large variety of languages as to what Islam is and what it can do for them. The message of Islam has to be explained to them, but this can only be done by a systematic publication of millions of tracts in a large number of languages, languages in which there is up to this time either no Islamic literature at all or only what is negligible.

Here I wish to draw your attention to the magnificent work which the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore, has done in this direction. In the matter of producing Islamic literature and its free distribution among non-Muslims, there is no other organization in the Islamic world which can show anything like it. The Holy Quran has already been translated into three European languages, English, Dutch and German, the last-mentioned of which alone is awaiting publication for want of sufficient funds. Other literature, dealing with different aspects of Islam, has been published in twenty-five languages, thirteen of which are Indian, Urdu, Gurmukhi, Hindi, Bengali, Khasi, Sindhi, Gujrati, Kanari, Marhatti, Telugu, Tamil, Pushto,

Kashmiri. The other twelve are the languages-spoken outside India, in Asia, Europe and Africa. A number of religious periodicals is being published in the Urdu, English, Dutch, German, Javi and Malai languages. Not only is literature being produced in different languages, but it is also being distributed freely throughout the world; up to this time nearly ten thousand copies of the Holy Quran (English Translation) and as many copies of the life of the Holy Prophet (in English and other languages) have been supplied to libraries and individuals free of charge. Not less than ten million pages have been distributed free in the form of tracts.

Besides the production and distribution of literature, this Anjuman is doing the most important Islamic missionary work. The Working Mission which was under its management and control up to 1930 is now being managed by a separate trust. The following missionary work may be specially mentioned :—

- (a) *German Mission*.—Which was established in 1924 in Berlin where a grand mosque has been elected at an expense of about Rs 150,000. A quarterly magazine in the German language is issued free to enlighten German-speaking people as to the true teachings of Islam.
- (b) *Austrian Mission*.—Which was established about two years ago in Vienna, the work being in the hands of Baron Omar Ahrenfels,

who was converted to Islam by our Berlin Mission.

(c) *Java Mission*.—Which was established in 1924 and has produced immense literature in the Dutch, Javi and Malai languages, including a Translation of the Holy Quran into Dutch. The Java branch is arranging for establishing a mission in Holland.

The Spain Mission scheme, though not yet realized, has made sufficient progress, and it is hoped that the next year or two will see its fulfilment.

Besides these missions, Islamic propaganda is being carried on in 67 different countries through correspondence and the supply of literature ; and in addition to its foreign work, the Anjuman has been doing important missionary work in India, and has already brought about four thousand untouchables into the fold of Islam.

These facts show that the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam is eminently fitted to carry on propaganda work among the Depressed classes, to which the way has been opened by their attitude towards Hinduism, as shown above. I may add here that the fitness of this Anjuman for this work is enhanced by two other qualifications. In the first place, it has no quarrel with any other working body, as it works on the principle that all those who profess faith in the Kalima are Muslims, and that all constructive work for the advancement of Islam, by whomsoever done, must have the support of all other Muslims. Secondly, it believes in the principle of silent work, and is of the opinion that it is only through

solid work and avoiding propaganda through the press, that any useful result can be obtained.

The Anjuman has now resolved to start work in this direction immediately. Two of its best missionaries were sent immediately to Bombay, and on their report it has been decided to make arrangements for the production and distribution of literature among the Depressed classes. But its hands being already full, the new work can be carried on only with the co-operation of those Muslims who are awake to this great need. I am sure that if the Muslims make a serious effort, an effort proportionate to the Herculean task of winning over eight crores of people to the fold of Islam, even if not all, a large majority of these Depressed classes will find its salvation in Islam. A start is to be made at once with the work of distributing literature in such languages as Marhatti, Gujrati, Tamil, Telegu, Bengali, Hindi and Gurmukhi. But this work does not end with the production and distribution of literature, as arrangements will have to be made, when the time comes for the education, religious as well as secular, of the new brethren who are received into the faith. A sustained effort has therefore to be made, even if it be on a humble scale.

If this Anjuman succeeds in enlisting the sympathy for this great cause of even five thousand Muslims who help it with at least a donation of Rs. 25 per annum, a decent start can be given to the work immediately. As it is not in the interest of the work that any reports of it should be published in the press, a monthly report

will be sent to all those gentlemen who subscribe at least Rs. 25 annually to this fund, which sum may be paid in one or more instalments as the donor likes. I approach you with this appeal on behalf of the Anjuman, hoping that you will allow me to have your name on this list, stating the amount which you would pay annually and remitting the first instalment immediately.

I have further to draw your attention to the important missionary work which this Anjuman is doing. The light of Islam is being carried to countries which it has not yet reached, and Islamic literature, including the Translation of the Holy Quran and Life of the Holy Prophet is being sent to libraries in the West where it will benefit readers generation after generation. This work is the best *sadaqa jariya* which a Muslim can institute. The Anjuman has also two High Schools in which religious education is being given along with secular. Scholarships are given to deserving students to carry on higher studies, and stipends are given to widows and orphans. The anniversary of the Anjuman is coming off on the 24th, 25th and 26th December, and the Managing Committee hopes that you will be so good as to help it with a donation on this occasion, which may be devoted to the upkeep of the Berlin Mosque, mission work, free distribution of the Holy Quran and other literature, help of the poor or any other object which you may specify.

Yours Fraternally,

MUHAMMAD ALI,

President, Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore.

How to Help

Should our aims and objects appeal to you as worthy of your moral and material support, I would suggest some ways to help forward this cause of Islam which is common to us all and, I am sure, dear to us all :—

1. Earmark a percentage of your income as monthly subscription.

2. Specify a fixed portion of your Zakat for this cause.

3. Transfer the amount of interest on your bank deposits, not permissible for personal use, to the propagation of Islam.

4. Send a donation for any of the objects (which you approve.

5. Send an order for our literature for your own use or for presentation to non-Muslims.

6. Help us in the free distribution of Translation of Holy ~~Quran~~ and other Islamic literature—cheap edition costs only Rs. 2 8a.

7. Subscribe to our periodicals. The *Light* is particularly recommended.

8. Commend the cause we stand for, in your sphere of influence.

Remittances may please be addressed to: Financial Secretary, Ahmadiyya Anjuman-i-Isha'at-i-Islam, Ahmadiyya Buildings, Lahore, and correspondence to Secretary or President.

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